Frommer's

Nova Scotia, New Brunswick & Prince Edward Island

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Frommer's®

Nova Scotia, New Brunswick & Prince Edward Island

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by Paul Karr

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paul Karr is a prize-winning writer, editor, and musician. He has written, coauthored, or edited more than 25 guidebooks, including *Frommer's Maine Coast, Vancouver & Victoria For Dummies, Vancouver: The Irreverent Guide, Frommer's New England,* and *Frommer's Canada.* He has also edited Frommer's guides to the Bahamas, Jamaica, London, Paris, San Antonio, and San Francisco and written for *The New York Times, Sierra*, *Sports Illustrated,* and Insight Guides to Austria, Montréal, Switzerland, and Vienna, among others. He divides his time between New York, New England, Japan, and Europe.

HOW TO CONTACT US

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system.** In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **seven feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Facts	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Kids	Best bets for kids and advice for the whole family
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE American Express
DC Diners Club
DISC Discover
MC MasterCard
V Visa

TRAVEL RESOURCES AT FROMMERS.COM

Frommer's travel resources don't end with this guide. Frommer's website, **www.frommers.com**, has travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly, giving you access to the most current trip-planning information and the best airfare, lodging, and car-rental bargains. You can also listen to podcasts, connect with other Frommers.com members through our active-reader forums, share your travel photos, read blogs from guidebook editors and fellow travelers, and much more.

1

The Best of the Atlantic Provinces

Planning a trip to Atlantic Canada shouldn't be hard, yet the number of small towns, quaint inns, and potential driving routes makes it a bit complex. I've scoured the four provinces here for the best destinations and experiences; here are some top choices.

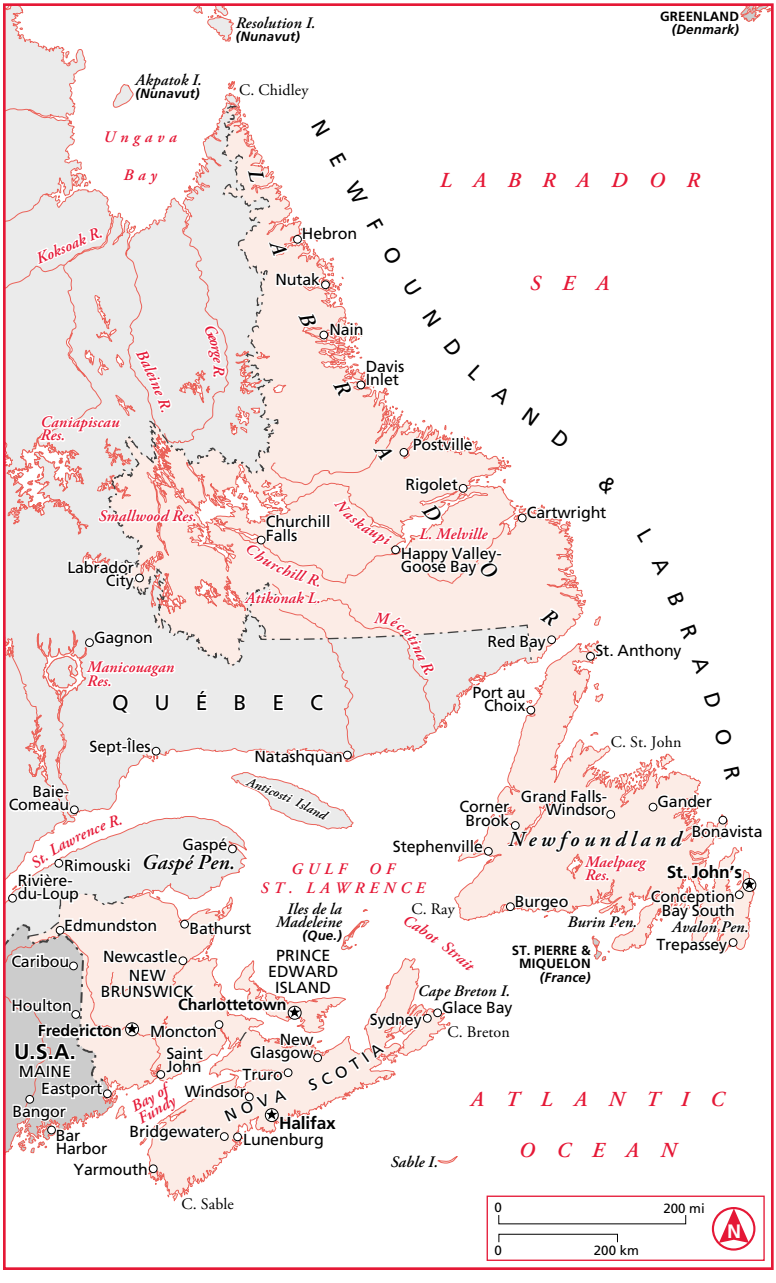
1 THE BEST ACTIVE VACATIONS

- **Sea Kayaking in Nova Scotia:** The twisting, convoluted coastline of this province is custom-made for snooping around by sea kayak. Outfitters are scattered around the province. For expedition kayaking, contact outfitter **Coastal Adventures** (www.coastaladventures.com) about a current schedule of trips. See chapter 5.
- **Biking the Cabot Trail** (Nova Scotia): The long, strenuous loop around Cape Breton Highlands National Park is tough on the legs, but serious cyclists will come away with a head full of indelible memories. See "Cape Breton Island" in chapter 5.
- **Exploring Fundy National Park and Vicinity** (New Brunswick): You'll find swimming, hiking, and kayaking at this coastal national park. And don't overlook biking in the hills east of the park, or the outdoors center at Cape Enrage. See "Fundy National Park" in chapter 6.
- **Cycling Prince Edward Island:** This province sometimes seems like it was created specifically for bike touring. Villages are reasonably spaced apart, hills are virtually nonexistent, the coastal roads are picturesque in the extreme, and an island-wide bike path offers detours through marshes and quiet woodlands. See "The Great Outdoors" in chapter 7.
- **Hiking Gros Morne National Park** (Newfoundland): Eastern Canada's best wilderness hiking is found in the rugged hills of Gros Morne. You can hike amazing coastal trails, marvel at scenic waterfalls, and stroll alongside landlocked fjords in this visually stunning park. See "The Great Outdoors" in chapter 8.

2 THE BEST SPOTS FOR OBSERVING NATURE

- **Digby Neck** (Nova Scotia): Choose from among the whale-watching outfitters located along this narrow peninsula of remote fishing villages. And simply getting to the tip of the peninsula is half the fun—it requires two ferries. See "Digby to Yarmouth" in chapter 5.
- **Cape Breton Highlands National Park** (Nova Scotia): The craggy geology on the west side of this headland is impressive enough, but don't let it overshadow the *rest* of the park, where you'll find bogs, moose, and plenty of quiet spots. See "Cape Breton Highlands National Park" in chapter 5.

Atlantic Canada



- **Grand Manan Island** (New Brunswick): This big, geologically intriguing rock off the New Brunswick coast is a great base for learning about coastal ecology. Whale-tour operators search out the endangered right whale and dozens of birds roost and pass through. Boat tours from the island will also take you out to see puffins. See "Grand Manan Island" in chapter 6.
- **Hopewell Rocks** (New Brunswick): The force of Fundy's tremendous tides is most impressive at Hopewell Rocks, where great rock "sculptures" created by the winds and tides rise from the ocean floor at low tide. See "Fundy National Park" in chapter 6.
- **Avalon Peninsula** (Newfoundland): In a busy day you can view a herd of caribou, the largest puffin colony in North America, and an extraordinary gannet colony visible from the mainland cliffs. See "The Great Outdoors" in chapter 8.

3 THE BEST SCENIC DRIVES

- **Cape Breton's Cabot Trail** (Nova Scotia): This 300km (185-mile) loop through the uplands of Cape Breton Highlands National Park is one of the world's great excursions. You'll see Acadian fishing ports, pristine valleys, and some of the most picturesque coastline anywhere. See "Cape Breton Island" in chapter 5.
- **Cobequid Bay** (Nova Scotia): When it comes to scenery, Cobequid Bay (near Truro) is one of the region's better-kept secrets. The bay is flanked by two roads: Route 2 runs from Parrsboro to Truro; Route 215 from South Maitland to Brooklyn. Take the time to savor the rocky cliffs, muddy flats, and rust-colored bays. See "Minas Basin & Cobequid Bay" in chapter 5.
- **Fundy Trail Parkway** (New Brunswick): East of Saint John, you'll find this parkway winding along the contours of the coast. Get out and stretch your legs at any of the two dozen lookouts along the way for fantastic cliffside views. Or if the tides are out, clamber down to one of the stretches of sand nestled between the rocks. See p. 189.
- **Prince Edward Island National Park:** Much of the north-central shore of PEI is part of a national park. The quiet park road tracks along the henna-tinted cliffs and grass-covered dunes. The coastal road is interrupted by inlets in spots, but each segment is still worth a leisurely drive, with frequent stops to explore the beaches and walkways. See "Prince Edward Island National Park" in chapter 7.
- **Viking Trail** (Newfoundland): Travelers wishing to leave the crowds behind don't need to look any farther than this beautiful drive to Newfoundland's northern tip. It's a wild and solitary ride, with views of bizarre geology, wind-raked coastline, and maybe even icebergs at the right time of year. Finally the road ends at one of North America's great historic sites: L'Anse aux Meadows. See "The Great Northern Peninsula" in chapter 8.

4 THE BEST HIKES & RAMBLES

- **Point Pleasant Park** (Nova Scotia): Overlooking the entrance to Halifax's harbor, Point Pleasant Park is a wonderful urban oasis, with wide trails for

strolling along the water. Check out the Martello tower atop a wooded rise. See p. 111.

- **Cape Breton Highlands National Park** (Nova Scotia): There are certainly lots of quiet, comtemplative walks on Cape Breton, but the best trails follow rugged cliffs along open ocean. The Skyline Trail is among the most dramatic walkways in Canada. See "Cape Breton Highlands National Park" in chapter 5.
- **Grand Manan Island** (New Brunswick): Grand Manan is laced with informal walking trails passing through forests and along the ocean's edge. This is a place for exploring; ask around locally for suggestions on the best hikes. See "Grand Manan Island" in chapter 6.
- **The Confederation Trail** (Prince Edward Island): This pathway across the island is best for long-distance cycling, but it's superb for a quiet stroll in spots along the path. See "Kings County" in chapter 7.
- **Green Gardens Trail** (Newfoundland): This demanding hike at Gros Morne National Park takes hikers on a 10-mile loop, much of which follows coastal meadows atop fractured cliffs. It's very demanding, for serious hikers only, but worth every step. See "Gros Morne National Park" in chapter 8.
- **North Head Trail** (Newfoundland): Where else can you hike from downtown shopping to cliffside whale-watching? In St. John's, this trail progresses from downtown's bustle, along the harbor, through a quirky neighborhood (the Battery), then up open bluffs overlooking the harbor narrows for views stretching out to the open ocean. See "St. John's" in chapter 8.

5 THE BEST FAMILY ACTIVITIES

- **Upper Clements Park** (Nova Scotia): About 5 minutes south of Annapolis Royal, this old-fashioned amusement park is full of low-key attractions that delight kids. Highlights include a flume ride (originally built for Expo '86 in Vancouver) and a wooden roller coaster that twists and winds through trees left standing during the coaster's construction. See "Annapolis Royal" in chapter 5.
- **Waterfront Walk** (Nova Scotia): Halifax's waterfront walk is filled with fun distractions, from the province's best museum to ships you can climb onto and explore. Also look for sweeping views of the bustling harbor. If you're here in early August during the internationally famous Busker Festival, lend an ear. See "Halifax" in chapter 5.
- **Kings Landing** (New Brunswick): At this living history museum, young kids are introduced to life in early Canada between 1790 and 1910. Ask about the week-long sessions designed to immerse kids in the past. See chapter 6.
- **Prince Edward Island's Beaches:** The red-sand beaches will turn white swim trunks a bit pinkish, but it's hard to beat a day or three splashing around these lukewarm waters while admiring the pastoral island landscapes. There are great beaches both within the national park, and also on many points and coves outside it. See "The Great Outdoors" in chapter 7.
- **Terra Nova National Park** (Newfoundland): This is the less touted of Newfoundland's two national parks, but staff go the extra mile to make it especially kid-friendly. There's a marine interpretive center with activities for kids; boat tours; hikes just the right length for shorter legs; and planned activities at night at the main campground. See "Terra Nova National Park" in chapter 8.

6 THE BEST PLACES FOR HISTORY

- **Annapolis Royal** (Nova Scotia): The cradle of Canadian civilization can be found in this broad green valley, where early French settlers first put down roots. Visit Fort Anne and Port Royal, and walk some of the first streets on the continent. See "Annapolis Royal" in chapter 5.
- **Maritime Museum of the Atlantic** (Nova Scotia): Nova Scotia's history *is* the history of the sea, and no place better depicts that vibrant tradition than this sprawling museum right on Halifax's waterfront. See chapter 5.
- **Louisbourg** (Nova Scotia): This early-18th-century fort and village was part of an elaborate French effort to establish a foothold in the New World. It failed, and the village ultimately fell into ruin. In the 1960s, the Canadian government reconstructed much of it, and now it's one of the best historic sites in the Maritimes. See "Cape Breton Island" in chapter 5.
- **Village Historique Acadien** (New Brunswick): This huge complex depicts life as it was lived in an Acadian settlement of New Brunswick between 1770 and 1890. You'll learn all about the exodus and settlement of the Acadians from costumed guides, who also demonstrate skills ranging from letterpress printing to blacksmithing. See chapter 6.
- **Province House National Historic Site** (Prince Edward Island): Canadian history took shape in Charlottetown in 1864, when the idea of joining Britain's North American colonies into an independent confederation was first discussed seriously. Learn about what transpired at this Charlottetown edifice, which has been restored to appear as it did when history was made. See chapter 7.
- **Bonavista Peninsula** (Newfoundland): It may seem like the ends of the earth today, but in previous centuries Newfoundland was a crossroads of European culture, where nations scrapped over fishing rights and settlements. You can learn a lot about how the Old World viewed the New during a few days exploring this intriguing peninsula. Base yourself in the perfectly preserved village of Trinity, and spend at least a day exploring up to the town of Bonavista, where you can visit the Ryan's Premises National Historic Site and learn why the cod was god. See "The Bonavista Peninsula" in chapter 8.
- **L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site** (Newfoundland): This dramatic site on Newfoundland's northern tip celebrated its 1,000th "anniversary" in 2000. Yes, it's been a full millennium since the Vikings are believed to have landed here and established a significant encampment. View the intriguing ruins, enter the re-created sod huts, and hear the interpreters discuss theories about why the colony failed. See chapter 8.

7 THE MOST PICTURESQUE VILLAGES

- **Lunenburg** (Nova Scotia): Settled by German, Swiss, and French colonists, this tidy town is superbly situated on a hill flanked by two harbors, and it boasts some of the most unique and quietly extravagant architecture in the Maritimes. Bring your walking shoes for the hills. See "South Shore" in chapter 5.
- **Victoria** (Prince Edward Island): This tiny village west of Charlottetown is surrounded by fields of grain and potatoes,

and hasn't changed all that much in the past, oh, 100 years or so. Try to time your visit to take in an evening show at the town's wonderfully old-fashioned playhouse. See "Prince County" in chapter 7.

- **Trinity** (Newfoundland): Three centuries ago, Trinity was among the most important ports in the New World, a place from which English merchants controlled the flow of goods into and out of the New World. This compact village has also been among the best in eastern Canada at preserving its past, and the architecture and perfect scale of the village is unmatched in the region. See "The Bonavista Peninsula" in chapter 8.
- **Twillingate** (Newfoundland): This end-of-the-world village is located on and around the convoluted harbors and inlets of Newfoundland's north-central shore. At the mouth of Notre Dame bay, high headlands mark the way for incoming ships; walk out there and scan the horizon for whales and icebergs. See "Central Newfoundland" in chapter 8.

8 THE BEST INNS

- **Gowrie House Country Inn** (Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia; ✆ **800/372-1115** or 902/544-1050): The exquisitely decorated Gowrie House is at once resplendent and comfortable, historic and up-to-date. The smallest guest rooms are more spacious than larger rooms at many other inns. See p. 156.
- **Kingsbrae Arms** (St. Andrews, New Brunswick; ✆ **506/529-1897**): This five-star inn manages the trick of being opulent and comfortable at the same time. The shingled manse is lavishly appointed, beautifully landscaped, and well situated for exploring charming St. Andrews. See p. 177.
- **The Great George** (Charlottetown, PEI; ✆ **800/361-1118** or 902/892-0606): This connected series of restored town houses is historic, central, welcoming, and quite comfortable. Continental breakfast is served in the open-concept lobby, where you can watch the comings and goings without getting in the way. Rooms range from spacious doubles to huge family-size suites, and most of them have either a fireplace, a whirlpool bath, or both. See p. 245.
- **Inn at Bay Fortune** (Bay Fortune, PEI; ✆ **888/687-3745** or 902/687-3745): This exceptionally attractive shingled compound was most recently owned by actress Colleen Dewhurst, and current innkeeper David Wilmer pulled out all the stops during renovations. But the real draw here is the dining room, which is noted for the farm-fresh ingredients grown in the extensive gardens on the property. See p. 255.

9 THE BEST BED & BREAKFASTS

- **Shipwright Inn** (Charlottetown, PEI; ✆ **888/306-9966** or 902/368-1905): This right-in-town, nine-room B&B is within easy walking distance of all the city's attractions yet has a settled and pastoral feel. It's informed by a Victorian sensibility without being over-the-top about it. And the rooms are surprisingly modern, with phones, VCRs, DVD players, decks, and Jacuzzis. See p. 245.
- **Tickle Inn at Cape Onion** (Cape Onion, Newfoundland; ✆ **866/814-8567** or

709/452-4321): The Tickle Inn serves a family-style dinner each night, so technically it isn't a B&B at all—but this tiny and remote home has the cordial bonhomie of a B&B all the same. Set on a distant cove at the end of a road near Newfoundland's northernmost point (you can see Labrador across the straits), the Tickle Inn offers a perfect base for visiting L'Anse aux Meadows and walking on the lonesome, windy hills. See p. 289.

- **At Wit's Inn** (St. John's, Newfoundland; ✆ **877/739-7420**): This centrally located B&B is bright, cheerful, and whimsical. The inn has managed to preserve the best of the historical elements in this century-old home while graciously updating it for modern tastes. See p. 321.

2

The Atlantic Provinces in Depth

Nova Scotia's easternmost provinces can perhaps best be described by what surrounds them: the sea. Miles and nautical miles of deep gray-blue sea. You're never far from the frigid North Atlantic when traveling in any of the four provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island (PEI), and Newfoundland and Labrador: All the major highways carry you alongside it, or to and from it. Nearly all of the major cities and hotels cozy up to it.

Indeed, this has long been a fisherman's paradise—ever since native Canadian times—and without those huge schools of fish that have historically thrived in the icy, deep waters of the Gulf of Maine (thanks to a fortuitous collision with the warm, northeastward-flowing Gulf Stream), these provinces would probably be emptier than the Dakotas today. Even so, the Maritimes remain a scrappy place to carve out a living thanks to the rough weather (summer is short, winter storm-tossed) and a geography that leaves the place feeling largely inaccessible from the rest of the free world.

So you have to appreciate those who have dug in here and made the place their own. The English, Scottish, Irish, and French colonists who came to North America were all well-suited for the task of fishing these waters; they'd had plenty of practice back home. For some reason, though, the Scots found this area more hospitable than the others, and it is they who stayed longest and have infused the region most strongly with their character. Whisky, mailboxes peppered with "Mac," and fish and chips: staples of Nova Scotia.

English influences are most strongly felt on the tranquil isle of Prince Edward; once a Royalist hideout, it's now nearly as prim and British a place as Kensington and an easy place to find a good game of golf. The French? They're here, too, in large pockets of New Brunswick and PEI, and to a lesser extent in Nova Scotia. (Try the Cheticamp area, for starters.) Newfoundland, though, is simply a land apart—big, untamed, historic, at times jaw-droppingly scenic. Its denizens consist mostly of fishermen, escapist wilderness lovers, and/or eco-trekker types, most of whom love a good tipple and some live tunes. Think of it as an eastern Alaska (with better music).

While the fisheries have waned somewhat in recent years, creating deep concerns about the future of the Maritimes, the ocean is still the chief touristic draw. And if ever a place were built for ecotourism and quiet contemplation of nature, it's eastern Canada. Whale-watching, deep-sea fishing, and maritime-museum hopping are what you do here; in fact, some would argue they're all you *can* do here.

If you're looking for sun-splashed beaches, crazy nightlife, or a thousand tongues in the streets, you've come to the wrong corner of North America. Sail away on the next boat south. But if you're tiring of cities and keening for a pie of locally harvested berries, a kayak in quiet waters, an iceberg sighting, or a spot of spontaneous fiddle music at the local pub? Well, then, this is the best place in North America.

Kick off those shoes. They'll probably get wet anyway.

1 THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES TODAY

NOVA SCOTIA This province is the undisputed star of Canada's Atlantic coast: Its capital, Halifax, is a relative financial and cultural powerhouse compared with the rest of the hamlets scattered through eastern Canada. Halifax is also the surest bet for an outstanding meal, a world-class musical performance, or a great museum. The city is home to a number of colleges and universities, which gives it a youthful, edgy air—skateboards and bicycles often seem to be the vehicles of choice.

But there's far more to Nova Scotia than just one city, including the South Shore (an especially photogenic stretch of fishing villages); the hardscrabble Acadian Coast, with its spruce-topped basalt cliffs and miles of sandy beaches; and astonishing Cape Breton, an enormous northerly island dominated by one of Canada's finest national parks and a tradition of Celtic music.

NEW BRUNSWICK Overlooked New Brunswick is a strangely shaped province that's often passed over in the rush to elsewhere. Glimpsed from up close, though, it turns out to possess some of Canada's quaintest villages. Fishing villages like St. Andrews and Caraquet cry out to be photographed; Fredericton and Moncton offer more than expected; and the city of Saint John contains more culture per square inch than any place in this book save Halifax.

Culturally, too, New Brunswick is Canada in microcosm. It's seemingly split between Anglophone and Francophone populations (a third of the province's residents speak French), and its heritage is both proudly Acadian and proudly British—in fact, New Brunswick is sometimes called the Loyalist Province, since so many Loyalists fleeing the United States after the American Revolution settled here.

Despite this, the cultural divide is much less contentious here than in Québec; it's a sort of détente zone between the two cultures. Maybe that's because French-speaking residents of New Brunswick share very few cultural roots with French-speaking Québecois: New Brunswick's French settlers came mostly from central and western France—farm country—while the Québecois trace their ancestry to the seaside *départments* of Brittany and Normandy. As a result, Acadians in New Brunswick celebrate a Feast of the Assumption in mid-August as their big national holiday instead of St. Jean Baptiste Day (in late June), which is the must-party day in Québec City and Montréal.

New Brunswick even likes to think of itself as a potential model for Québec, though Québeckers more or less ignore their quiet next-door neighbors. That's too bad; they're missing out on an unsung national treasure.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND This island leaves the razzle-dazzle to cities on the mainland, choosing instead to soothe visitors' souls by offering places for quiet relaxation. A flat island of red sands, potato farms, and purple lupine fields—plus healthy doses of fishing boats, golf, Acadian culture, and children's literature (you'll see what I mean)—PEI is the sort of place best explored by bicycle and then pondered later over a good book. The province's harborside capital city of Charlottetown is genuinely attractive, historic, and diverse; this was the place where the deal consolidating Canada into one nation ("the Confederation") was sealed, and it's still a little gem of a town.

The island has, somewhat remarkably, managed to retain the bucolic flavor of a century ago, and pockets of sprawl are still few and far apart. But the handwriting may be on the wall, especially in the central part of the island. The old cottage lots have been gradually sold off for years; FOR SALE signs spring up in increasing numbers in the alfalfa

and potato fields, and as time goes on it's possible more and more of the lush interior of PEI will be claimed by subdivisions, luxe resorts, and malls. You can already see signs of this unfortunate trend in the suburbs outside Charlottetown, and in the southeast of the island. My advice? The sooner you can visit, the better.

NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR These two distinct geographic areas are administered as a single province; thus, the phrase "Newfoundland and Labrador" sometimes refers to that province, sometimes to the two physically separate places.

In any case, this is the part of eastern Canada you need to work hardest to reach—but it's also the most rewarding in some ways. People here make a serious run for the title of "friendliest in all of Canada," and that's saying something given Canadians' natural geniality. The natural wonders in Newfoundland are spectacular, including (to list just a few) shimmering icebergs, migrating whales, fish everywhere, and Viking settlement sites. For good measure, there's a major city here (St. John's) with a salty, pubby pulse. The harder-to-reach adjacent territory of Labrador has even more authentic culture, fishermen, and wilderness—and absolutely zero crowds.

You're most likely to land in St. John's, and while the city is trying hard to capture the hearts of the ecotourist crowd, it is still very much a working harbor today; as such, don't expect the place to be quaint. Across the way are charmless oil-tank farms and offloading facilities for tankers, a major container-ship wharf occupies the head of the harbor, and along the water's edge on Harbour Street downtown you'll often find hulking ships tied up. Pedestrians can stroll and gawk—but wholesale commerce remains the focus here, not yet boutiques or fine dining.

2 LOOKING BACK AT THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

Here's a brief look at some historical episodes and trends that have shaped eastern Canada.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES & VIKINGS

The so-called Maritime Archaic Indians, primarily a hunting and fishing culture, populated parts of Atlantic Canada beginning perhaps 7,500 years ago—far predating the more famous Inuit, who "only" arrived about 4,000 years ago. These early natives relied chiefly on the sea for their food, fashioning ingenious hooks and spears to do so. Why they eventually disappeared, nobody knows. Could it have been the long winters?

Tribes also spilled north from the region we know today as the state of Maine: M'ikmaq, Maliseet, and the Passaquamoddy (also more broadly known as Algonquin and Abenaki). These peoples also lived a nomadic life of fishing, trapping, and hunting; they changed camp locations several times each year to take advantage of seasonal fish runs, wildlife movements, and the like. They would persist until the European colonists made contact with them in relatively "recent" times.

One of the most amazing chapters in coastal history was the short visit by the Vikings (yes, *those* Vikings), who rowed and sailed all the way from Scandinavia around A.D. 1000 to the windswept northern coast of Newfoundland. They decamped at a point of land called L'Anse aux Meadows (see chapter 8), where as many as 100 Vikings appeared to have lived at the peak of the settlement, including some women.

But the Vikings abandoned the settlement after just a few years, returning to Greenland and Denmark and thus ending the first European experiment in the colonization of North America—an experiment that would not be resumed for 500 more years, when a fellow named Columbus would try it. No graves have ever been discovered at this Viking site. What does that mean? We simply don't know. But it certainly is intriguing.

EUROPEAN FISHERMEN & BRITISH LOYALISTS

The Vikings would not be the last fishermen to ply this coast. Next, historians believe, came occasional Portuguese fishermen in the 15th century, who landed in the lovely Trinity region of Newfoundland. Some also believe the explorer John Cabot—who was actually an Italian, despite his since-Anglicized name—made landfall at Cape North in 1497, at the site of present-day Cabot Landing Provincial Park; the province still celebrates an annual Discovery Day each June. So let's hope Cabot *did* touch land there.

The French made the first significant attempts at establishing a new colony, though they were driven out time and again by the locals. Antigonish, Nova Scotia, for instance, would be a French town today—except the first settlers were chased off by angry Mi'kmaq. (When they came back to the same spot a full century later, Irish Loyalists chased the Frenchmen off *again* and laid out the first permanent community. Perhaps it simply wasn't mean to be.)

Largely thanks to the aggressively, shall we say, protectionist actions of its native peoples, the region's first permanent settlement didn't come until 1605, when a group including famed seaman Samuel de Champlain arrived in the Annapolis Valley at Port Royal—right across the river from present-day Annapolis Royal. Champlain called the lovely Annapolis Basin "one of the finest harbors that I have seen on all these coasts," and the strategic importance of that well-protected harbor was later proven during struggles for control of the region, when a series of forts was constructed on the low hills overlooking the water.

Unaware of the Revolutionary troubles brewing to the south, the eastern provinces were settling organically. Farmers and fishermen slowly began filtering in from Europe and the colonies to the south. The Louisbourg fortress was built. The mid-1750s saw an explosion of settlement along the South Shore, including the towns of Chester (by Brits), Mahone Bay (by Anglican devotees), and Lunenburg (by German, Swiss, and French fisherfolk and boatbuilders, who laid it out in a grid with Germanic-Swiss precision, despite its hilly terrain). And, of course, there was Halifax, whose well-shaped natural harbor attracted Europeans in 1749 when Colonel Edward Cornwallis established a military outpost here.

But the separate peace here would not last long. The signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, which recognized the American right of separation from Mother England, was like a bombshell. This single piece of paper would have profound effects on the subsequent composition and history of the Maritimes.

For those in America whose sympathies (or livelihoods) lay with the British, it created an untenable situation: They were men without a country. But England still held eastern Canada. The solution was obvious.

A huge wave of fearful British Loyalist settlers and their families began fleeing New England and New York City by horse and foot, washing up at little harbors like Shelburne, Nova Scotia (which became a wooden boat-building stronghold—bigger, for a time, than both Montréal and Halifax). French settlers also ran for the eastern provinces. The Rustico region on the northern shore of PEI became one of the first in Canada to be permanently populated by the so-called Acadians following the treaty's signing.

Would England be able to handle the strain of these new immigrants? How would it govern them? Would they eventually have ideas of their own independence? It was all up in the air, and things felt tenuous.

AN INDUSTRIAL AGE

Tensions grew with the Maritimes' sudden spike in population, but somehow the British retained their hold on Canada for nearly another century, though that too would eventually crumble. The eastern provinces' place in Canadian history was forever cemented in 1864 when Charlottetown hosted the conference that would eventually lead to the creation of Canada as a separate nation—an event that is still remembered and celebrated on PEI today. The deeper significance was clear, too: this was no longer some backwoods fishing hole. The Maritime Provinces could be an engine of capitalism and growth for the new nation.

And so it was. The second half of the 19th century was a time of incredible growth and excitement for the Maritimes. No longer were they isolated fishing posts; now railroads, steamships, and the machination of certain production processes brought the fish to New York and Boston faster and fresher than ever. Boats could be built or fixed here, then sent anywhere in the world.

Demographics swung wildly as a consequence. Sydney, an ashamedly working-class town, became north Nova Scotia's industrial hub for decades, a legitimate rival to Halifax. The province of Newfoundland even experienced a sudden, happy rush of fame thanks to its good fortune of being more proximate to Europe than any other point of land in North America. The first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable was laid here, a key airfield was established at Gander, and historic flights regularly set out from or completed their oceanic crossings here.

Yet this northern heyday would be sadly short-lived, lasting only three generations or so. As the highway and the jet airplane took over as means of transportation on the continent, the mill towns and factories and airstrips began to wane.

And then the Great Depression hit.

MODERN TIMES: TOURISM & NATURAL RESOURCES

In the wake of the Great Depression and the larger changes happening in the world—new transport methods; wars; a growing taste for production, consumption, and fashion—the Maritimes were forced to scramble. And out of desperation they came up with the same brilliant stroke President Franklin D. Roosevelt did in the wake of the Great Depression: Rather than cutting down all the trees for commerce, they'd build parks and roads to the forests instead, then charge paying customers for the privilege of looking at them and walking among them. (F.D.R. himself was a big fan of the Maritimes, in fact—he summered at Campobello in New Brunswick every year for decades, and one can still visit his home. See chapter 6.)

Subsequently, provincial and national parks, golf courses, roads, inns, and expansive resort hotels began appearing at a furious pace. The spectacular Cabot Trail winding around Cape Breton Island was paved in 1939, ushering in decades of wide-eyed tourists.

During the 70 or so years since, the Maritimes have gradually moved ahead with the times. Natural resources—specifically timber, paper, lobsters, and fish—remain the mainstays of the regional economy, just as they have for generations. The region's many protected natural harbors have also created important ports for oil and similar products imported from around the world to North America. New light industries and technology

ventures have made inroads in the urban areas. And visitors continue coming for the unique charms of the eastern provinces; tourism income is still necessarily an important piece of the puzzle here.

There is another subtle change occurring here, too. Second homes and cottages in the Maritimes are lately more valuable than they have ever been, and an uptick in new development (during the boom times, at least) by outsiders worries many longtime residents. Meanwhile, the provinces' most remote parts have not really felt any sort of economic kick from the past half century of growth. For these locals, the Maritimes remain an enduringly difficult place to eke out a living—yet they continue doing so, just as their parents and grandparents did before them.

This tension, between moneyed outsiders and hard-bitten locals, hasn't really come to a head yet. Maybe it never will. (Canadians, on the whole, are uncommonly good-natured.) But there's certainly the potential for a certain clash of wills, even if nobody wishes that to be the next chapter in eastern Canada's long story. After all, the rest of the book has been downright fascinating so far.

3 THE LAY OF THE LAND

The human history of eastern Canada is usually thought of as beginning in or around the 17th century with the arrival of European colonists—or, from what we can guess about Viking settlements in Newfoundland, maybe as far back as the 11th century. But the clock actually turns back much farther than that—beginning thousands of years ago, when Native American tribes fished Atlantic shores and hunted these hills. Even they were here for only a sliver of the long period of time required to create this place; situations like this call for the word *eons*. The rocks upon which you climb, sun yourself, and picnic are old—staggeringly old.

Before arriving, then, it's a good idea to acquaint yourself with the natural history of the place. Armed with a little respect and appreciation for the landscape before you, you just might treat it more reverently while you're here—and help ensure that it remains for future generations to behold for many years.

ROCKY ROAD: GEOLOGY OF THE LANDSCAPE

The beginnings of eastern Canada are perhaps a half-billion years old. You read right: That's *billion,* with a *B.*

At that time, deep wells of liquid rock known as magma were moving upward, exploding in underground volcanoes, then hardening—still underground, mind you—into granitelike rocks. Later, natural forces such as wind and water wore away and exposed the upper layers of these rocks. Their punishment was only beginning, however; soon enough (geologically speaking, that is), what is now eastern North America and most of Europe began to shove up against each other, slowly but inexorably.

This "collision" (which was more like an *extremely* slow-motion car wreck) heated, squeezed, transformed, and thrust up the rocks that now form the backbone of the coastline. Ice ages came and went, but the rocks remained; the successive waves of great glaciation and retreat scratched up the rocks like old vinyl records, and the thick tongues of pressing ice cut deep notches out of them. Huge boulders were swept up and deposited by the ice in odd places. When the glaciers finally retreated for the last time, tens of thousands of years ago, the water melting from the huge ice sheet covering North

America swelled the level of the Atlantic high enough to submerge formerly free-flowing river valleys and give the coastline and places like Newfoundland their distinctively rocky, knuckled faces. (Inland, at Prince Edward Island, the boulders laid down tons of silt and sand in their wake; that's what the island is, basically: a big sandbox.)

Once the bones of this landscape were established, next came the flesh: plants and animals. After each ice age, conifers such as spruce and fir trees—alongside countless grasses and weeds—began to reform, then decompose and form soils. It was tough work: Most of eastern Canada is a rocky, acidic place. Yet they persevered (as plants tend to do), and soon spruces, firs, and hemlocks formed an impenetrable thicket covering much of the coastal bedrock. Again, PEI was the exception: Mostly grasses, weeds, flowers, and pine trees sprouted up in the red mud and sand dumped here by the glaciers—because such an environment is inhospitable to almost everything else.

As the trees and flowers and fruits became reestablished, animals wandered back here, too—some now extinct but some still thriving today in the fields, hills, and woods of the region.

Eastern Canada's unique position—it is near the warm Gulf Stream—also bequeathed it plenty of marine (and economic) life: The current passes over the high, shallow undersea plateau known as Georges Bank, bringing an astonishing variety of microorganisms, and the marine life that follows, right to these provinces' doorsteps. Migrating whales make for a wonderful spectacle twice each year; seabirds travel similar passages, lighting upon the rocks and lakes of the region. And the waters teem—though not as they once did: Two of the three species of striped bass in the Bay of Fundy have disappeared from overfishing—along with fish, lobsters, crabs, dolphins, and a great deal more.

Then there are the coast's tidal pools, that precarious zone where land and rock meet ocean; a closer look at these pools reveals an ever-changing world of seaweed, snails, barnacles, darting water bugs, clams, shellfish, mud-burrowing worms, and other creatures. Interestingly, the type of life you find changes in well-marked "bands" as you get closer to water; rocks that are always submerged contain one mixture of seaweed, shellfish, and marine organisms, while rocks that are exposed and then re-submerged each day by the tides have a different mix. It's fascinating to note how each particular organism has found its niche. Move it up or down a foot and it would perish.

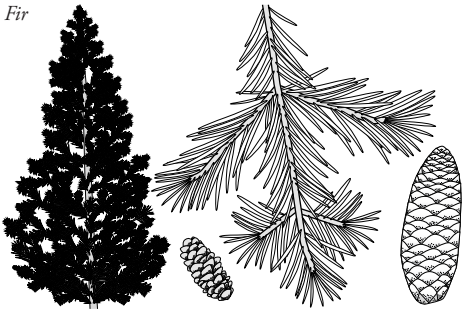
What follows is only the barest sketch of some of the nature life you'll find in eastern Canada. For a real look at it, go see it yourself. Whether you explore the provinces on foot, by bicycle, by kayak, by charter boat, or some other way, you're almost certain to see something that you've never seen before. If you're attentive, you'll come away with a deeper respect for things natural—not only here, but everywhere.

THE FLORA & FAUNA

Trees & Shrubs

BALSAM FIR The best-smelling tree in the provinces must be the mighty balsam fir, whose tips are sometimes harvested to fabricate aromatic Christmas-tree wreaths. They're most common in Newfoundland but are also found in pockets of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. It's sometimes hard to tell a fir from a spruce or hemlock, though the balsam's flat paddlelike needles (white underneath) are unique—only a hemlock's are similar. Pull one off the twig to be sure; a fir's needle comes off clean, a hemlock's ragged. Still not sure you've got a fir tree on your hands? The long, glossy, almost purplish cones are absolutely distinctive. You can find tree farms around the Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, area.

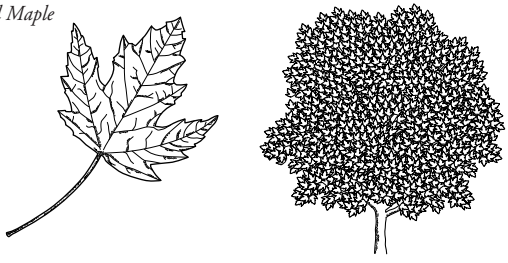
Balsam Fir



LOWBUSH BLUEBERRY Canada is the world's largest producer of wild blueberries, officially known as lowbush blueberries, cultivating nearly $70 million worth annually. With shrubby, tealike leaves and thick twigs, the plants lie low on exposed rocks on sunny hillsides, or sometimes crop up in shady woods; most of the year, the berries are inconspicuous and trail harmlessly underfoot. Come late summer, however, they're suddenly very popular—for bears as well as people. The wild berries ripen slowly in the sun (look behind and beneath leaves for the best bunches) and make for great eating off the bush, pancake baking, or jam making.

RED AND SUGAR MAPLE These two maple trees look vaguely alike when turning color in fall, but they're actually quite different, from the shapes of their leaves to the habitats they prefer. **Red maples** have skinny, gray trunks and like a swampy or wet area; often, several of the slim trunks grow together into a clump, and in fall the red maples' pointy leaves turn a brilliant scarlet color almost at once. **Sugar maples,** on the other hand, are stout-trunked trees with lovely, substantial leaves (marked with distinctive U-shaped notches), which autumn slowly changes to red and flame-orange. Sugar maples grow in or at the edges of mixed forests, often in combination with birch trees, oak trees, beech trees, and hemlocks. Their sap, of course, is collected and boiled down to make delicious maple syrup—big business in eastern Canada.

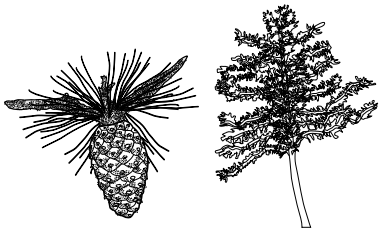
Red Maple



RED AND WHITE PINE These pines grow in sandy soils and like some (or a lot of) sunlight. The **eastern white pine** is the familiar "King's pine" once prevalent throughout the northeast portions of North America; you can recognize it by its very long, strong needles that are always arranged five to a clump, like a hand's fingers. Its trunk was prized

for the masts of ships of war in the 16th to 19th centuries, and countless huge pines were floated down Canadian rivers by logger men. Sadly, old-growth white pines are virtually nonexistent today, but you can still find the tree throughout eastern Canada. The **red pine,** not so common, can be distinguished by its pairs of needles and pitchy trunk; it grows on PEI (where it loves the sandy soil), but also in parts of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

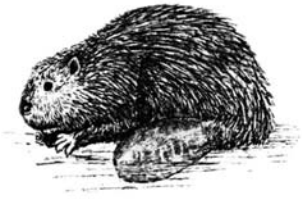
Red Pine



White Pine

Land Mammals

BEAVER Often considered symbolic of Canada, beavers almost became extinct in the early 1900s due to a brisk world trade in beaver pelts and the rapid development of wetlands. But today the beaver's lodge-building, stick-chewing, and hibernating habits are well known once again; you'll find them in streams, lakes, and ponds.



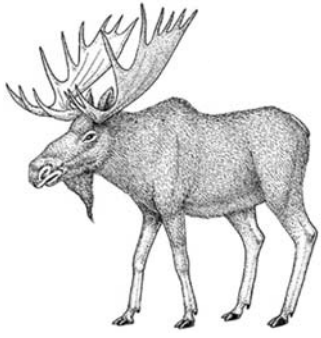
Beaver

Black Bear

BLACK BEAR Black bears still occur in eastern Canada, though in small numbers (still, you may want to keep a cover on that campfire food). The bears are mostly—emphasis on *mostly*—plant eaters and docile; they're the smallest of the North American bears and don't want trouble. Though they'll eat just about anything, these bears prefer easily reached foods on the woodland floor such as berries, mushrooms, nuts . . . and campers' leftovers. (Suspend leftovers in a "bear bag" away from your tent if you're camping in bear territory.) Black bears fatten up in fall for a long winter hibernation that averages 6 months.

MOOSE Nothing says Canada like a moose, and the huge, skinny-legged, vegetarian moose is occasionally seen in the deep woods of eastern Canada; in Nova Scotia, they're listed as a provincially endangered species, but New Brunswick holds an annual lottery dispensing hunting permits resulting in about 2,000 moose kills a year. They're commonly seen by the road in Newfoundland. (But there are *no* moose—or even deer—on PEI.) The animal prefers deep woods, lakes, ponds, and uninhabited areas, and you can't miss it: The rack of antlers on the male, broad linemanlike shoulders, spindly but quick legs, and sheer bulk (it's as big as a truck) ensure you won't mistake it for anything else. Be careful driving on highways through remote wooded areas late at night: A collision with a moose is often fatal for the driver.

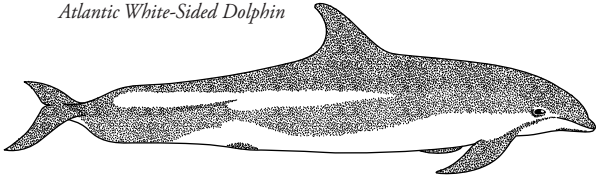
Moose



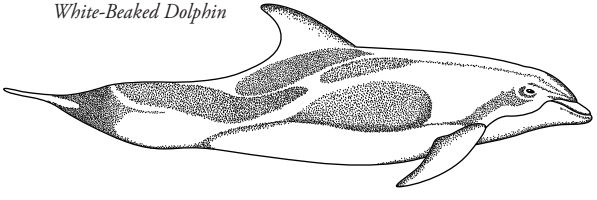
Marine Mammals

DOLPHIN Two very similar-looking species of dolphin—the **Atlantic white-sided dolphin** and the **white-beaked dolphin**—come to the Atlantic coast of the eastern provinces. Cute and athletic, these dolphins also occasionally turn up on beaches, for the same reason as pilot whales: Large groups are occasionally stranded by the tides, then perish when they cannot get back to sea in time.

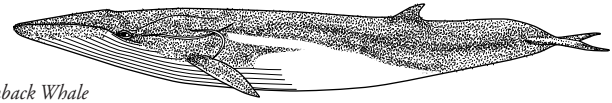
Atlantic White-Sided Dolphin



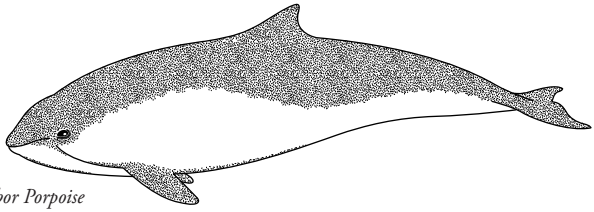
White-Beaked Dolphin



FINBACK WHALE A seasonal visitor to eastern Canada's waters twice a year when migrating between polar and equatorial waters, the finback is one of the biggest whales, and also one of the most collegial. It often travels in pairs or groups of a half-dozen or more (most whales are relatively solitary), though it does not travel close to shore or in shallow waters; you'll need a whale-watch boat to spot it. Find it by its rather triangular head and a fin that sweeps backward (like a dolphin's) rather than straight up like many other whales'. There are only 100 to 1,000 finbacks left in the waters off eastern Canada, according to the latest estimates.



Finback Whale



Harbor Porpoise

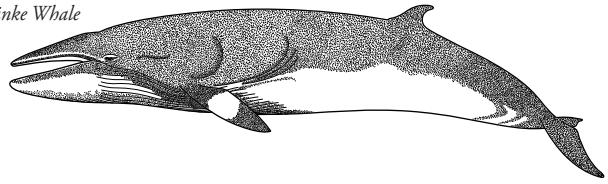
HARBOR PORPOISE Quiet in behavior and habit, the porpoise is not the same thing as the dolphin; in fact, it's darker, much less athletic, and with a blunter, triangular fin. (The dolphin jumps out of the water and has a sharper fin that sweeps backward.)

HARBOR SEAL Related to sea lions, the whiskered harbor seal is common in all seasons in the Atlantic provinces. It's best seen by using a charter-boat service, as you'll often find it basking in the sun on rocks offshore. You'll easily recognize it: The seal's flippers have five claws, almost like a human hand; its neck is stocky and strong (as are its teeth); and then there is its fur, and those whiskers.

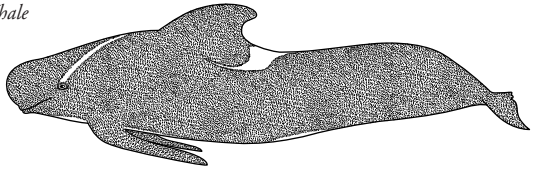
HUMPBACK WHALE Though this whale's Latin name roughly translates to "large-winged New England resident," the gentle, gigantic humpback isn't often seen from shore in eastern Canada, except in the Digby, Nova Scotia, area. (That's mostly because they were easy targets in the heyday of whaling.) Whale-watch tours often pass humpbacks, and if you see them, you'll never forget the sight: They are huge, jet-black, blow tremendous amounts of water when surfacing, and perform amazingly playful acrobatics above water. The males also sing haunting songs, sometimes for as long as 2 days at a time. The world population has shrunk to perhaps 20,000 whales.

MINKE WHALE The smallest (and most human-friendly) of the whales, the minke swims off the coast of Canada, usually moving in groups of two or three whales—but much larger groups collect in feeding areas and during certain seasons. It has a unique habit of approaching and congregating around boats and ships, making this a whale you're quite likely to see while on a whale-watch tour. The minke is dark gray on top, the throat has grooves, and each black flipper fin is marked with a conspicuous white band.

Minke Whale



Pilot Whale

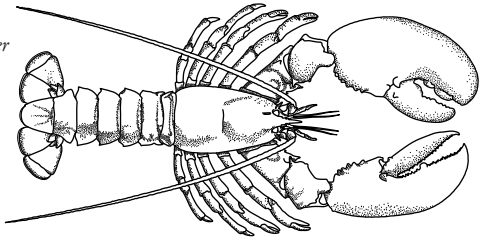


PILOT WHALE A smallish whale, the pilot is often seen in Atlantic Canadian waters by whale-watching boats, but it's still poorly understood: Its habits, true population, and diet are mostly unknown. It *is* known to congregate in large groups, sometimes numbering up to several hundred, and even to swim with other species of whale at sea. But pilot whales sometimes become stranded by changing tides. Nearly unique among whales in this part of the world, the pilot has teeth; the roundish fin is swept back like a dolphin's.

Invertebrates

AMERICAN LOBSTER Everyone knows the lobster by sight and taste; what few know is that it was once considered ugly, tasteless, and unfit to eat. There was a time not long ago when prisoners were served lobster and lobster stew three times a day. Today, the situation is quite different: This is one of eastern Canada's major exports. Lobsters are related to crabs, shrimp, and even spiders and insects (sorry to spoil your appetite); they feed by slowly scouring the ocean bottom in shallow, dark waters, locating food by smell (they see very poorly). The hard shell, which is periodically shed in order to grow larger, is the lobster's skeleton: A greenish-black or rarely blue color when alive, it turns bright red only after the lobster is cooked.

American Lobster



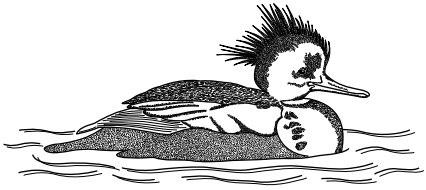
Birds

BALD EAGLE Yes, they're here in Atlantic Canada—year-round—and even breed here, though they're difficult to find and hardly conspicuous, except on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. (Their endangered status means you shouldn't really seek them out

anyway.) The bald eagle's black body, white head, and yellow bill make it almost impossible to confuse with any other bird. It was nearly wiped out in the 1970s, mainly due to environmental poisons such as DDT-based pesticides, which caused female eagles to lay eggs that were too weak to sustain growing baby chicks. However, the bird is beginning to make a comeback.

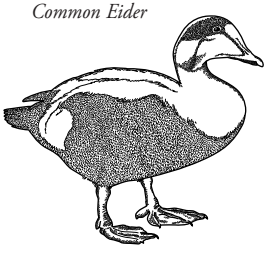
Bald Eagle

Red-Breasted Merganser



DUCK Between one and two dozen species of ducks and ducklike geese, brant, and teal seasonally visit the lakes, ponds, and tidal coves of eastern Canada every year, including—though hardly limited to—the **red-breasted merganser** and the **common eider.** Mergansers, characterized by very white sides and very red bills (in males) or reddish crests (in females), occur year-round but are more common in winter months. So is the eider, which inhabits offshore islands and coastal waters rather than provincial freshwater lakes; in winter, these islands form huge rafts of birds. Males are marked with a sharp black-and-white pattern.

Common Eider

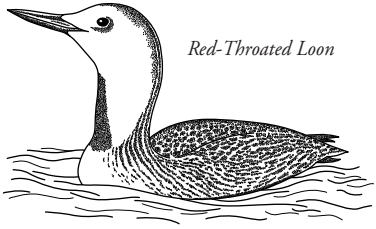


Great Blue Heron

GREAT BLUE HERON Everyone knows a great blue at once, by its prehistoric flapping wings, comb of feathers, and spindly legs. These magnificent hunters wade through tidal rivers, fishing with lightning strikes beneath the surface, from May through around

October. The smaller, stealthier green heron and yellow-crowned night heron are rarely seen.

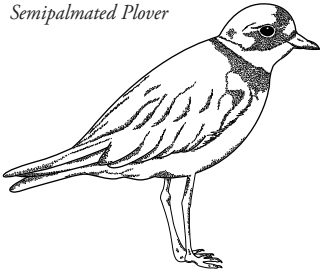
LOON Two species of loon visit the region's lakes and tidal inlets, fishing for dinner. The **red-throated loon,** grayish with a red neck, is a spring passer-through and very rare in summer or winter. The **common loon** is, indeed, much more common—it can be distinguished by a black band around the neck, as well as black-and-white stripes and dots—and can be found in Canada year-round, though it's most easily spotted in late spring and late fall. It summers on lakes and winters on open patches of ocean inlets, giving a distinctively mournful, almost laughing call. Both loons have been decimated by environmental changes such as oil spills, acid rain, and airborne mercury.



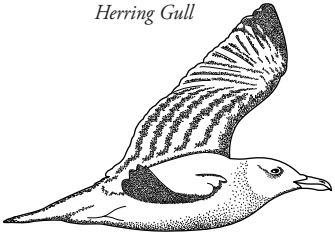
Red-Throated Loon

Common Loon

PLOVER Plovers inhabit and breed in certain muddy tidal flats, and their habitat is precarious; a single human step can crush an entire generation of eggs. Four species of plover visit eastern Canada in a few spots, and they're here only for a relatively short time. The **lesser golden-plover** flocks in considerable numbers in September while passing through, and the **greater golden-plover** occasionally lands in Newfoundland during migration. The **semipalmated plover,** with its quite different brownish body and white breast, has a similar life cycle and is also usually only seen in spring, passing through.



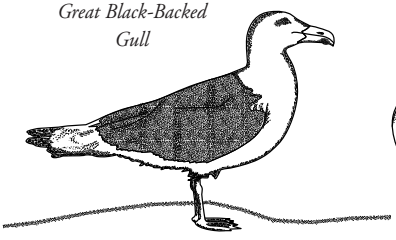
Semipalmated Plover

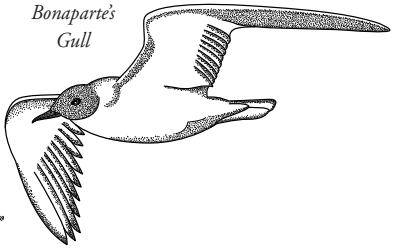


Herring Gull

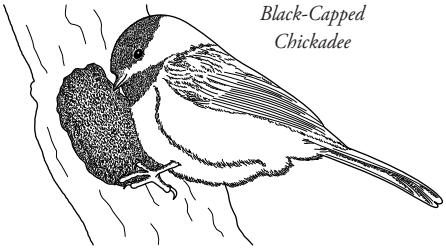
SEAGULL No bird is as closely associated with the sea as the seagull. But there's more than one kind of gull in eastern Canada. A number of gulls are found here year-round, a few species visit seasonally, and a few more pop up only occasionally. Most common is the grayish **herring gull,** which is also the gull least afraid of humans. It's found in prevalence every month of the year. The **great black-backed gull** is similarly common, and is nearly all white (except for that black back and wings). This aggressive bird will even eat the eggs of another gull but in general avoids humans. There's a huge colony on

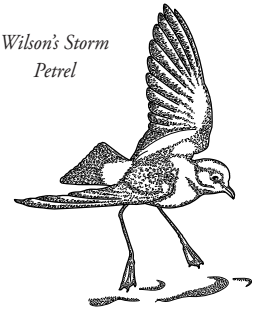
Lake George outside Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. You might also see **glaucous, ring-billed,** and even **laughing** and **Bonaparte's gulls** (rarely, and usually only in summer), not to mention the related **black-legged kittiwake.**


Great Black-Backed Gull


Bonaparte's Gull

SONGBIRD There are literally dozens of species of songbirds that roost in Acadia's open fields, forests, and dead snags—even in the rafters and bird boxes of houses. They are not so common in remote rocky places like Newfoundland as in suburbia (greater Halifax, for instance) or in the farmlands of the provinces. One thing is for certain: Songbirds love human company, so look for them near the settled areas. The region hosts a dozen or so distinct types of chirpy little **warblers,** each with unique and often liquid songs; a half-dozen **thrushes** occurring in significant numbers; winter **wrens, swallows, sparrows, vireos, finches, creepers,** and **thrashers;** the whimsical **black-capped chickadee;** and occasionally lovely **bluebirds, cardinals,** and **tanagers,** among many other species.


Black-Capped Chickadee


Wilson's Storm Petrel

STORM PETREL The tiny storm petrel is a fascinating creature. These plucky little birds fly astonishing distances in winter, eating insects on the wing, only to return to the coast each spring like clockwork, usually in May. They spend an amazing 4 months incubating, hatching, and tending to their single, white eggs in nests eked out of rocks. **Wilson's storm petrels** sometimes follow behind offshore boats; the much less common **Leach's storm petrel** restricts its visits and nests solely to far-offshore rocks and islands and is also mostly nocturnal, which reduces the chances of seeing it further. Both breed in summer, then head south for winter.

4 THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES IN POPULAR CULTURE

Here's a "starter kit" of films, CDs, and literature that can prepare you for a rewarding visit to the Atlantic Provinces.

BOOKS

Anne of Green Gables by L. M. Montgomery is a children's book for all time and a lovely evocation of life on Prince Edward Island. Originally published in 1908, Montgomery's fictional, ever-sunny Anne is the island's most famous export, hands down; this cycle of novels about an adopted red-haired girl remains enormously popular worldwide, thanks to both Montgomery's delineation of island characters and Anne's irrepressible optimism. It's less well known that there is an entire series of *Anne* books; *Gables,* the original in the series, only takes Anne's life through age 16. In future installments, Montgomery gave her a job as a school principal and took readers through Anne's marriage and motherhood. Montgomery was prolific beyond the *Anne* cycle as well, writing a series of spin-off novels about the lives of other townspeople in the fictional town of Avonlea; *Chronicles of Avonlea* (1912) and *Further Chronicles of Avonlea* (1920) are probably the best known. Montgomery also authored a number of other books and short stories set on the island not involving Anne at all, although none of these has achieved anywhere near the lasting fame of the *Anne* stories; these works include *Jane of Lantern Hill (1937), Mistress Pat (1935),* and *Along the Shore,* a 1989 collected volume.

If you can locate it, the Oxford University Press edition of *Anne of Green Gables* is annotated with plenty of biographical material, excerpts from the author's girlhood journals, colloquial explanations of cookery, directions to locations featured in the book, and the like—it's a better choice for adult travelers. The Children's Classics edition is a simple hardcover version, great for kids.

No book with adult themes set in the Maritime Provinces is more famous than ***The Shipping News*** by E. Annie Proulx (1993). Proulx won both a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award for her second novel, the tale of a crushed down-and-out New Yorker who moves to Newfoundland and takes up a job penning articles for a shipping newspaper in the land of his forebears—a position which puts him at an intersection with some of the more fascinating characters on (or just passing through) the Rock. The protagonist must also battle the demons left him by his former wife. Yet he somehow begins to rebuild a life of dignity, hope, and purpose. Although often criticized for its overblown style, there's no denying this novel captures that peculiar blend of isolation, perkiness, and quirkiness that makes up a Newfie.

In ***The Bird Artist,*** author Howard Norman continues the tradition of Vermont-linked authors (see E. Annie Proulx, above) heading north and finding literary gold in the Maritimes. This book, about a remote Newfoundland fishing village, was a finalist for the 1994 National Book Award, and rightly so. It spins the yarn of a local artist (with a tremendous gift for drawing birds) who has committed a murder and seeks a curious redemption for that act through his drawings and a marriage arranged by his parents. His true love, Margaret, is a hoot—a hard-drinking, sexually aware woman—and yet touching, as are many of the assembled minor characters, from the village

reverend on down. It's a heartfelt novel and ought to be brought along on any trip to the Rock.

Norman is more than a one-book wonder. His novel ***The Museum Guard*** (1999) is set in a fictional Halifax art museum, where a downbeat guard's female companion becomes obsessed with a Dutch painting. The stories of the guard's upbringing, his lady's obsession, and their dreary lives tell much about the often claustrophobic and hard-bitten lives of Maritimers.

Norman turned to nonfiction for ***My Famous Evening*** (2004), recounting both his own personal travels and correspondences in Nova Scotia as well as some fantastic, seemingly unreal stories of real Nova Scotians and some folk tales from the province. Definitely worth picking up if you will be in Nova Scotia.

Recently reissued, ***A Whale for the Killing*** by Farley Mowat (1972) is a true story that became a touchstone for animal rights activists. The famed biologist and activist tells the tale of a huge whale stranded in a Newfoundland cove in the 1970s and the group of locals bent on killing it; the real-life Mowat becomes the whale's protector but ultimately fails—then writes about it afterward. It's interesting for the clash of ideals between local fisherfolk and an environmentalist from the "outside" (Mowat is from Ontario and Saskatchewan originally). This is not a pretty, quaint look at the Maritimes but rather a slice of real life here.

In ***The Boat Who Wouldn't Float*** (1969), Mowat turned to humor, and the resulting book (now reissued) turns out to be surprisingly raucous and sidesplitting. Mowat purchases a used schooner in Newfoundland, but it doesn't hold water well, and there are serious doubts he'll ever get out of port. His subsequent misadventures and cruises among the ports of Newfoundland and beyond are wonderful fodder. Reading them, you learn about screech (a famously powerful Newfie liquor) and much more; it's clear Mowat holds great affection for the Newfies, even as he skewers them and himself.

For historical background, try to find ***Part of the Main*** by Peter Neary and Patrick O'Flaherty (1986). In it, two of the Maritime Provinces' most prolific historians lay out the history of Newfoundland and Labrador. It was published by a local St. John's publisher; the book is improved by the inclusion of several hundred photographs.

For a look at where the economy of the region is headed lately, ***Lament for an Ocean*** by Michael Harris (1998) is a fine nonfiction work documenting the shockingly sudden decline of the Maritime fisheries—and the consequences for both Newfoundland's way of life and its already imperiled economy.

FILMS

Many films have been made in the Maritimes but precious few have been made *about* them.

Johnny Belinda (1948) is one. The film takes place on Cape Breton Island, starring lovely Jane Wyman in a surprisingly sensitive performance as a deaf-mute woman who is sexually assaulted and then turns on her attacker. She won an Oscar for the role.

The Shipping News (2001) is an evocative picture with a stellar cast, based on the novel of the same name by E. Annie Proulx. The film was shot in Newfoundland—a condition of Proulx's sale of the screen rights, it's been said—and the visuals alone make the film an excellent watch. Kevin Spacey is the news writer Quoyle (he seems to have gained a little weight for the role), and Cate Blanchett plays his abusive wife.

MUSIC

Music in the Maritime Provinces is generally a Celtic-inflected folk, or else a pop music greatly influenced by that sound.

Nova Scotia native **Sarah McLachlan** is the exception; she has made it bigger around the globe than anyone else from eastern Canada, thanks to a continuing stream of haunting, minor-key pop classics. Among her studio albums, *Fumbling Towards Ecstasy* (1994) features the single "Possession" and was her first breakout hit. *Surfacing* (1997) features "Sweet Surrender" and "Building a Mystery." The live record *Mirrorball* (1999) recaps much of McLachlan's best work in a live setting, including the often-heard gem "I Will Remember You."

Among the more folksy bands making headway, the Newfoundland band **Great Big Sea** have been the standard-bearers of modern Celtic music around the Maritimes for a while now, graduating from bar band to genuine folk influence in the best tradition of the Chieftains and the like. Of their output, I like *Turn* (2000) best; tunes such as "Boston and St. John's" speak closely to life in such an isolated, seafaring place.

The Rankins—a family group from little Mabou, on Cape Breton Island—were sorely underappreciated outside of eastern Canada while they were still together. The band broke up in the late 1990s, and one of its members was subsequently killed in a tragic auto accident on a twisting Cape Breton road, but their folk roots and chops came together with contemporary production (in the style of Enya or Clannad) in a way that has stood the test of time. Though a bit overproduced, there's no denying the mournful power of Jimmy Rankin's ballads, the infectious drive of the late John Morris Rankin's fiddle, and the lovely sweet harmonies of Rankin sisters Cookie, Raylene, and Heather. Among their oeuvre, *North Country* (1995) is the most fitting legacy to these local kids who made good.

Cape Breton fiddler **Natalie MacMaster** is probably Canada's finest, drawing favorable comparisons to American fiddler Alison Krauss. *A Compilation* (1998) serves as a nice introduction to her lightning-fast yet subtle style. On *Blueprint* (2003), she is joined by American musicians working in the same general vein, such as Béla Fleck and Sam Bush.

Finally, any serious discussion of Maritime music cannot omit the great **Hank Snow.** More than a decade before there was a Bob Dylan, and around the same time Hank Williams, Sr., was shooting to prominence, there was Snow, too, born in the small Nova Scotia fishing town of Liverpool (near Lunenburg), a rambling, yodeling ranger of a crooner who made a mark on Nashville and legions of folk and country musicians to come. One of Elvis Presley's heroes, he's a member of the Country Music Hall of Fame and was a Grand Ole Opry staple for years. *The Essential Hank Snow* (1997) includes the classic "I'm Movin' On," which he wrote, as well as 19 other cuts.

5 EATING AND DRINKING IN THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

The eastern reaches of Canada are many things—adjectives like placid, wild, friendly, and wave-swept come to mind—but one thing they aren't is gourmet. Culinarily speaking, you've more or less reached a dead end. Think Scotland, without the haggis.

Well, that's not entirely true. There are a few local tastes that might catch your fancy. Like these:

FISH AND CHIPS Fish-and-chip shops certainly aren't unique to eastern Canada, but they do the chippie proud here. Check around the Halifax area (see chapter 5), or the shoreline just to the south. Order cod if you can.

LOBSTER Wherever you see wooden lobster traps piled high on a wharf, a fresh lobster meal can't be far away. Among the most productive lobster fisheries are those around Shediac, New Brunswick, and along Nova Scotia's entire Atlantic coast (see chapters 5 and 6). Sunny days are ideal for cracking open a crustacean while sitting at a wharf-side picnic table, preferably with a locally brewed beer close at hand.

North-central Prince Edward Island is also famous for its church-sponsored lobster suppers. The typical supper might include a lobster or two, a hunk of blueberry cake, and some corn on the cob. See chapter 7.

MUSSELS & OYSTERS Some say you can't find better mussels or oysters anywhere in the world than those harvested in the shallow waters on, and offshore of, Prince Edward Island. It's hard for me to argue with that sentiment; restaurants from New York to Tokyo covet (and pay big bucks for) these prized PEI shellfish. You can get them on the relative cheap at local seafood houses and shacks; sometimes you can even buy a bag off the docks. See chapter 7.

NEWFIE FARE Newfoundland is a world apart from the rest of the Maritimes. (Literally: It's an island without bridges.) It makes sense that a regionally unique cuisine would have developed here.

Among the things you'll see on local menus here but nowhere else in Canada: seal flipper. (Like it or not, the seal hunt is deeply ingrained in regional culture.) Other distinctive local dishes include fried cod's tongues; sea urchin; brewis (say "bruise"; basically, salted cod on a cracker); and a traditional dish known as Jiggs dinner (a pot of beef, carrots, cabbage, and other vegetables similar to New England boiled dinner).

The unforgivingly rocky and boggy soil of this blustery island resists most crops, but it produces some of the most delicious berries in Canada. Look for roadside stands selling blueberries, strawberries, partridgeberries, squashberries, and bakeapples (cloudberries, that is). Or pick your own at a local farm (cheaper and more fun). Many restaurants here also serve berries (on cheesecake, in custard, and so on) when they're in season.

The local drink to try is "screech," an extra-powerful rum. See chapter 8 for more examples of Newfie cuisine, such as it is.

RAPPIE PIE Foodies in search of obscure-eats rapture might indeed feel they've died and gone to heaven when they reach the southwestern shore of Nova Scotia (see chapter 5). This area, a French enclave known as the Evangeline Trail, is one of the best places in Canada to sample tried-and-true Acadian cooking. Rappie pie is a staple of the Acadian family restaurant: a rich, potato-stock-and-onion casserole which is then topped with a pile of pork rinds (yup), and then baked. Your body fat percentage *will* change as a result of eating one of these.

SCALLOPS The waters off Digby Neck (on the western shore of Nova Scotia; see chapter 5) produce some of the choicest, most succulent scallops in the world. They're ubiquitous on the menus of restaurants along the western shore of Nova Scotia, and show up in lots of fine kitchens around the rest of the province, too. A light sauté in butter brings out their rich flavor best.

SMOKED FISH Here and there, particularly along the Atlantic shore of Nova Scotia, you'll come across the odd fish-smoking shack. That's not really surprising, given the huge supply of smokeable fish just offshore. The most organized and commercialized operation is the J. Willy Krauch & Son's operation in the village of Tangier, Nova Scotia (see chapter 5). Krauch & Sons' "hot-smoked" herring is a classic turn on the form.

WHISKY Deep in the highlands of Cape Breton, there's a distillery making lovely "Scotch" (which can't be called Scotch, this not being Scotland). So, single-malt whisky then. It's still fantastic, crafted from the pure local water. See chapter 5.

3

Planning Your Trip to the Atlantic Provinces

The four eastern provinces of Canada are safe and scenic yet stretched out and fairly remote, with few choices of travel options. And the tourist season here is remarkably short. As such, the region requires some care when planning if you want to be sure about getting maximum value for your travel expenditures, avoiding transit snafus, and finding available accommodations that fit both your budget and your needs.

On the other hand, you won't need to worry at all about things that vex travelers to some destinations: violent crime, snakes, sharks, inoculations against disease, and the like. All in all, this is one of the easiest, most comfortable places to travel with a family that I have been—so long as you don't mind long drives.

I have tried to dispense some vital planning information in the chapter that follows. Reading it before you set out could save you money, time, and many of those headaches I've just described. In these pages, you'll get the nuts and bolts of travel in the provinces: when to come, the documentation you'll need, where to get more information, how to keep connected with the home office or family, and more. These basics just might make the difference between a smooth trip and a bumpy one.

For additional help in planning your trip and for more on-the-ground resources in eastern Canada, please turn to "Fast Facts," on p. 326.

1 WHEN TO GO

WEATHER All the Atlantic Provinces lie within the **North Temperate Zone,** which means that they have weather much like New England in the United States. **Spring** is damp, cool, and short, though it can get warm and muggy as it eases into summer.

Summer's compact high season runs from early July to early September. That's when the great majority of travelers take to the road, enjoying the bright, clear days and warm temperatures. The average high in the southern three provinces is in the upper 70s°F (around 25°C); in Newfoundland, it's more typically in the upper 60s°F (around 20°C). Nights can become cool, even approaching freezing, by late summer.

Be aware that there is no "typical" summer weather in Atlantic Canada. The only thing typical is change, and you're likely to experience balmy, sunny days as well as howling rainstorms—quite possibly on the same day. Travelers who come here prepared for an occasional downpour, both psychologically and equipment-wise, tend to be happier than those who expect all blue skies. That's because the weather in all four provinces is to a large degree affected by the ocean. This means frequent fogs, especially on the Fundy Coast of New Brunswick, the Atlantic Coast of Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland's Avalon Peninsula. The ocean also offers an unobstructed corridor for high winds, particularly on Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland.

Note that the ocean does provide some benefits: Prince Edward Island's summer

tends to linger into fall, thanks to the warm, moderating influence of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, and you'll rarely experience a sultry hot, humid day because of the natural air-conditioning action of the sea breezes.

Fall is a time of bright leaf colors but also rapidly cooling temperatures, especially at night, and much shorter daylight hours. Bring winter sweaters and a heavy coat.

Few travelers tackle the Maritimes in the dead of **winter,** as frequent blustery storms sweep in off the Atlantic. But if you're one of those hardy souls who might, be aware that snow or ice storms are a very real possibility at any time during winter, and they can blow in suddenly; if you're driving, make sure your car is equipped with good snow tires and special antifreeze windshield wash (you can get it from any gas station). And drive cautiously: Outside the major urban areas, most of this region's high-speed arteries are two-lane roads sans medians. Watch for drivers coming your way.

Halifax Average Monthly Temperatures

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
High (°F)	29	29	36	47	57	67	73	73	65	54	44	34
(°C)	–1	–1	2	8	13	19	22	22	18	12	6	1
Low (°F)	14	14	22	32	41	50	57	57	50	40	32	20
(°C)	–10	–10	–5	0	5	10	13	13	10	4	0	–6

HOLIDAYS The national holidays in Canada are celebrated from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic oceans; for the traveler, this means all government offices and banks will be closed at these times. (Shops remain open on some but not all national holidays.) **National holidays** here include New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day (the third Monday in May, always 1 week before Memorial Day in the United States), Canada Day (July 1; this is a biggie—expect fireworks), Labour Day (first Monday in September, same as in the U.S.), Thanksgiving (mid-October; the same as Columbus Day weekend in the United States), Remembrance Day (November 11), Christmas Day (December 25), and Boxing Day (December 26).

Locally observed **provincial holidays** include a civic holiday (August 2) in Nova Scotia; New Brunswick Day (the first Monday in August); and several holidays in Newfoundland and Labrador, including St. George's Day (April 26), Discovery Day (the third Monday in June), and Orangeman's Day (July 12). Check out the proceedings.

Acadian pockets of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, or Prince Edward Island also celebrate St. Jean Baptiste Day (June 23–24), which was actually pagan in origin (for the summer solstice, known in Europe as midsummer's night) but has since become associated with Catholic, Québecois, and Franco culture. Expect tons of Franco fun on this day.

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those listed here, check **http://events.frommers.com**, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

2 ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

PASSPORTS

Since 2007, U.S. citizens and permanent residents of the United States **must show a passport to enter Canada and reenter the U.S.** This is a *big* change from the past, when a driver's license and a smile

were often enough to get you across the border. If you don't have a passport, get one before your trip, and remember it will take a few weeks to process your application. See "Fast Facts," p. 329, for more details on obtaining a passport.

Very frequent cross-border travelers should inquire about the government's **NEXUS program,** a joint Canada-U.S. effort which gives you a sort of quick-entry pass—though it can only be used at about a dozen specific border crossings. Details on NEXUS may be found at the U.S. customs and border patrol website, **www.cbp.gov**.

For more information about traveling into Canada, browse the "Visiting Canada" section of the Canadian website **www.goingtocanada.gc.ca**. You can phone Canadian immigration officers at ✆ **888/242-2100,** but only from within Canada. Better to contact a local Canadian immigration office; they can be found in Buffalo, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Washington, D.C., in the U.S., as well as in cities around the world, such as London, Paris, Sydney, and Tokyo. For a full list of offices and lots more information, see Citizens and Immigration Canada's website at **www.cic.gc.ca**.

VISAS

American travelers to Canada do not require visas and neither do residents of many other countries, including citizens of most European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Mexico, and some present and former British territories in the Caribbean—this includes anyone holding a green card in the U.S. or anyone who is a British overseas citizen of the U.K. Needless to say, bring your identification or the relevant paperwork on your trip. If you're still not sure about whether you will need a visa or not, consult the Canadian government's up-to-date listing of countries whose residents do need one at **www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp**.

For more information on obtaining a Visa, see "Fast Facts," on p. 330.

CUSTOMS

What You Can Bring into Canada

Customs regulations allow adult travelers (19 or older) to bring 1.5 liters (50 oz. or 1 bottle) of wine or 1.14 liters (40 oz.) of liquor or 8.5 liters (287 oz.) of beer (not all three) into Canada without paying any duties or taxes. Travelers can also bring in up to 200 cigarettes and up to 50 cigars without paying duty or tax. An automated phone service can answer most of your questions about Customs regulations; call the **Canada Border Services Agency** at ✆ **800/461-9999** within Canada only, or 204/983-3500 or 506/636-5064 from outside Canada. Also consult the Canadian Customs website for more details on border crossing. It's located at **www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca**.

Regulations regarding firearms, by the way, are more complicated; in short, it's best if you simply don't bring a gun. If you're traveling for hunting and need to bring a rifle into Canada, however, you should be traveling during hunting season and carry proof of your plans to hunt (a written confirmation from a guide service or hunting lodge would help immensely). There are also limits on how much ammunition you can bring in.

What You Can Take Home from Canada

Returning **U.S. citizens** who have been away for at least 48 hours are allowed to bring back, once every 30 days, US$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. (This allowance can be combined by family members traveling together—US$1,600 for two family members traveling together, US$4,000 for a family of five, and so on.) You'll be charged a flat rate of 4% duty on the next US$1,000 worth of purchases above your allowance. Be sure to keep

receipts handy to expedite the declaration process. On gifts mailed home, the duty-free limit is US$200. If you owe duty, you are required to pay on your arrival in the United States—either by cash, personal check, government or traveler's check, or money order (and, in some locations, a Visa or MasterCard).

To avoid paying duty on foreign-made personal items you owned before your trip, bring along a bill of sale, insurance policy, jeweler's appraisal, or receipts of purchase. Or you can register items that can be readily identified by a permanently affixed serial number or marking—think laptop computers, cameras, and CD players—with Customs before you leave. Take the items to the nearest Customs office or register them with Customs at the airport from which you're departing. You'll receive, at no cost, a Certificate of Registration, which allows duty-free entry for the life of the item.

For more information on what you're allowed to bring home, contact one of the following agencies:

U.S. Citizens: U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP; ✆ **877/287-8667;** www.cbp.gov).

U.K. Citizens: HM Customs & Excise (✆ **0845/010-9000** or 020/8929-0152 from outside the U.K.; www.hmce.gov.uk).

Australian Citizens: Australian Customs Service (✆ **1300/363-263;** www.customs.gov.au).

New Zealand Citizens: New Zealand Customs (✆ 04/473-6099 or 0800/428-786; www.customs.govt.nz).

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Unless you're arriving from an area known to be suffering from an epidemic (such as cholera or yellow fever), inoculations or vaccinations are not required for entry into Canada.

3 GETTING THERE AND GETTING AROUND

GETTING TO EASTERN CANADA

By Plane

Airports around Atlantic Canada offer access via scheduled flights. Halifax, Nova Scotia (YHZ), the region's major air hub, has frequent flights in and out of the region, as well as onward connections to local airports. Other major airports include Saint John, New Brunswick (YSJ); Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (YYG); and Gander (YQX) and St. John's (YYT), Newfoundland. All offer direct flights to and from airports outside of the region.

The main air carriers serving Atlantic Canada are **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) and its local-commuter partner **Jazz** (www.flyjazz.ca), which is based in Halifax.

Several American carriers including **Continental** (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com) are also jumping into the eastern Canada fray. Canada's own **WestJet** (✆ **888/937-8538;** www.westjet.com) now connects to Halifax from Toronto, for instance.

See the individual "Getting There" sections at the beginning of each chapter for more information.

By Car

Overland access to Atlantic Canada from the United States is through Maine. The most direct route to New Brunswick is to drive to Bangor (about 4½ hr. from Boston), then head east on Route 9 to Calais, Maine (about 2½ hr.). Here you can cross into St. Stephen, New Brunswick, and pick up Route 1 to Saint John and beyond. If you don't plan to stop until you hit Moncton or points east of Moncton, a

slightly faster alternative is to continue northeast on the **Maine Turnpike**—which is the northernmost end of the Eastern Seaboard's famous Interstate 95—to Houlton, then cross the border and pick up the Trans-Canada Highway. Remember that the Turnpike is a toll road for a stretch (the toll is US$5 maximum one-way for a passenger car), although it becomes completely toll-free past exit 113 at Augusta.

By Ferry

Between June and mid-October, travelers headed to Nova Scotia can save driving time by taking a ferry. Summertime ferries to Nova Scotia depart daily from either Bar Harbor or Portland, Maine. A year-round ferry also connects Saint John, New Brunswick (about a 4-hr. drive from either Bangor or Bar Harbor, Maine) with Nova Scotia; see "Getting Around," below for details.

Bay Ferries (✆ **888/359-3760;** www.catferry.com) operates the two international ferries using ***The Cat*** (short for catamaran), which claims to be the fastest ferry in North America; it zips along at speeds of up to 50 mph. Since going into service in 1998, the Cat has cut the crossing times from Portland and Bar Harbor to Nova Scotia in half: From Bar Harbor, travel time has gone from 6 hours to 3 hours, and from Portland it's now a 5½-hour ride instead of an overnight cruise. (Note that the ride can get very bumpy depending on wave and ocean conditions, so if you're sensitive to seasickness, bring and take motion-sickness medicine.)

The ferry operates from June through mid-October only on a staggered schedule, sailing from Portland two to four times per week (more in summer) and from Bar Harbor three times a week.

One-way summer fares from Portland at press time were C$99 for adults and children age 13 to 18, C$65 for children 6 to 13, C$94 for seniors, and C$164 per passenger car (more for trucks and buses), plus a C$25 fuel surcharge and a C$10 security fee—more than C$1,000 round-trip for a family of four with two young kids. There are discounts for day-trips or weekend round-trips, though I don't recommend such a quick dip into the province.

From Bar Harbor, it costs C$69 per adult and child age 13 to 18, C$47 per child age 6 to 12, C$64 per senior, and C$115 and up per vehicle—plus taxes, fees, and fuel surcharges.

Reservations for both routes are vital during the peak summer season.

By Train

Interprovincial rail service is now but a pale shadow of its former self. Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland lack rail service completely, as does southern New Brunswick (you can no longer travel by train to either Fredericton or Saint John).

There's just one train line: **VIA Rail** (✆ **888/842-7245;** www.viarail.ca), the national rail carrier, which stops in a handful of towns along its single overnight route between Montréal and Halifax. The train runs six times daily (no Tuesday departures from either terminal). In New Brunswick, VIA trains stop at Campbellton, Charlo, Jacquet River, Petit Rocher, Bathurst, Miramichi, Rogersville, Moncton, and Sackville. In Nova Scotia, you can get on or off the train at Amherst, Springhill Junction, Truro, or Halifax. And that's it.

Fares for the trip depend on which class of seat you buy, from an economy seat (sleep sitting up) to various configurations of cabins. A nondiscounted economy seat will run you about C$250 each way from Montréal to Halifax or back. Sleeping berths and private cabins are available at extra cost—the cheapest bed in a double-bunked cabin is about twice the cost of the no-bed fare—and VIA has even added a higher level of summer service on its overnight run (known as Sleeper Touring class)

which includes better beds, presentations from an onboard guide, and a private dome car. Discounts for those buying tickets at least 1 week in advance are sometimes possible.

The entire trip takes between 18 and 21 hours, depending on direction.

By Bus

Bus service into and out of this region tends to be slow and cumbersome. To get from New York to Halifax, for instance, you'd have to take one bus to Montréal (8–10 hr.), then connect to another bus line to Halifax (something like 18 hr.)—not my idea of a fun start to a vacation week. A late-spring through early-fall alternative from the East Coast of the United States is to bus it from New York to either Portland or Bar Harbor, Maine (either 6 hr. or 10 hr.), stay overnight in Maine, and then take the early morning ferry to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia (3–6 hr.). Just remember that you must be certain which port the boat is departing from each day; it alternates between the two ports almost daily. From Yarmouth, you must then catch another connecting bus onward to Halifax (about 4 more hr.).

Greyhound (✆ **800/231-2222;** www.greyhound.com) offers service from diverse points around the United States to Montréal's bus station (✆ **514/843-4231**), where you can connect directly to Atlantic Canada–bound buses. Figure on spending 12 to 18 hours to get from Montréal to key cities in the eastern provinces; there is a 6am departure, for example, arriving in Halifax around midnight of the same day.

Acadian Lines (✆ **800/567-5151;** www.acadianbus.com) offers service from Bangor, Maine, to New Brunswick several times weekly and reliable daily services within Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island.

A few local transit companies pick up the ball from there, such as **Kings Transit** (✆ **888/546-4442** or 902/678-7310; www.kingstransit.ns.ca), which can shuttle you cheaply among Wolfville, Kentville, and Digby.

GETTING AROUND

By Plane

There's a serious lack of competition for air routes in eastern Canada, which can mean you'll pay high fares for even a short hop to or around the region. **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) and its puddle-jumping subsidiary **Jazz** (www.flyjazz.ca) are often your only choices for both domestic and international flights, though **WestJet** (✆ **888/937-8538;** www.westjet.com) does connect Halifax with St. John's.

Newfoundland is the exception to this sorry situation, with an extensive system of small airports stitching together much of the far-flung province—and a few small regional air carriers to match, useful if you're heading for the backcountry to seek out wilderness or native culture. Local carriers here include **Air Labrador** (✆ **800/563-3042;** www.airlabrador.com) and **Provincial Airlines** (✆ **800/563-2800** from eastern Canada or 709/576-1666; www.provincialairlines.ca).

Note that smaller airports throughout the region—such as Bathurst, Fredericton, Moncton, Yarmouth, and Sydney—are starting to offer connections to the four main provincial hubs of Halifax, Saint John, Charlottetown, and St. John's. E-mail or call the local tourism authority in advance about such connections if you're interested.

By Car

Atlantic Canada's road network is extensive and generally well maintained. But travelers expecting to find six-lane highways with high-speed on- and off-ramps will be in for a surprise. With few exceptions, the highway system here is on a far smaller scale. Even main arteries, such as the inland route from Yarmouth to Halifax and Route 1 across Newfoundland, are nearly always just two lanes (one coming,

one going), albeit with frequent opportunities for passing due to the light traffic. The Trans-Canada Highway is the main road running through this region. It enters north of Edmundston, New Brunswick, and continues some 1,800km (1,120 miles) to St. John's, Newfoundland—taking a break at the Atlantic Ocean, of course. Numerous feeder roads connect to the Trans-Canada.

A few rules of the road: As in the United States and continental Europe, **drive on the right.** You may **make a right turn at a red light,** provided that you first stop fully and confirm that no one is coming from the left. (At some intersections, signs prohibit such a turn.) **Radar detectors are prohibited in all the Atlantic Provinces.** Drivers and all passengers are required to wear seat belts.

If you're arriving by plane, the usual suspects offer **car rentals** at major airports. Despite the number of rental outfits, however, it can be difficult to reserve a car during the short summer season, when demand soars. It's best to reserve ahead. For car-rental providers, see "Fact Facts," p. 333.

Remember that Canadian gas prices are higher than those in the U.S., though lower than they are in Europe. See "Gasoline" in the "Fast Facts" chapter, p. 327. for more information.

If you're traveling by car, also be sure to investigate carefully about **car-rental insurance** (see "Insurance" in the "Fast Facts" chapter, p. 327) before setting out on your trip.

By Ferry

There's an interprovincial ferry that can considerably shorten the slog around the Bay of Fundy. The year-round ferry, known as the ***Princess of Acadia,*** links Saint John, New Brunswick, with Digby, Nova Scotia. The ferry sails once daily year-round, with two crossings per day during peak travel months and days. A peak season one-way fare (charged June–October) costs about C$40 for adults, C$25 for children age 6 to 13, C$5 per child under age 6, and C$30 for students and seniors; the car itself costs C$80 (more for trucks, vans, and buses), plus a C$20 fuel surcharge. Fares are a bit cheaper outside the peak travel months, and if you walk on and return within 30 days, there are also discounts available on the round-trip. Note that AAA and CAA members receive C$10 discounts on the car fare. Tariffs on this route haven't budged in several years; nevertheless, up-to-the-minute schedules and fares can be found at **www.nfl-bay.com** or by calling ✆ **877/762-7245.**

A **second interprovincial car ferry** links Prince Edward Island with New Brunswick, though it doesn't save you time or money. See chapter 7 for details.

Finally, if you're going to **Newfoundland by car,** you *must* take a ferry ride—and a long one, at that. **Marine Atlantic Ferries** (✆ **800/341-7981;** www.marine-atlantic.ca) operates two routes from Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Port aux Basques (a 4–8-hr. trip) on the wild northern coast and also to Argentia (near St. John's; a 14–15-hr. trip). Reservations are always required for these two ferries; see chapter 8 for further details.

By Train

Once again, I stress: There's just one train in eastern Canada, **VIA Rail** (✆ **888/842-7245;** www.viarail.ca), which runs six times daily on an overnight route between Montréal and Halifax. You can theoretically connect between, say, Campbellton and Halifax in this way, though I've never met a casual tourist who did that. In New Brunswick, VIA trains stop at Campbellton, Charlo, Jacquet River, Petit Rocher, Bathurst, Miramichi, Rogersville, Moncton, and Sackville. In Nova Scotia, trains stop at Amherst, Springhill Junction, Truro, or Halifax. If you're serious about taking this train, see "Getting Around," above, for more information, and consult the VIA website for fares and schedules.

By Bus

Decent bus service is offered between major cities and many smaller towns by **Acadian Lines.** For service between Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, contact Acadian at ✆ **800/567-5151** or check the website at **www.acadianbus.com**.

4 MONEY & COSTS

The Value of the Canadian Dollar vs. Other Popular Currencies

Can$	US$	UK£	Euro (€)	Aus$	NZ$
C$1	97¢	£0.65	€0.72	A$1.06	NZ$1.38

Frommer's lists exact prices in the local currency. The currency conversions quoted above were correct at press time. However, rates fluctuate, so before departing consult a currency exchange website such as **www.oanda.com/convert/classic** or **www.xe.com/ucc** to check up-to-the-minute rates.

Cost-wise, the eastern provinces of Canada are **incredibly affordable**—among the most affordable such places in North America, I'd wager. You'll pay normal prices for food and gas, because those things are generally imported to the provinces, but hotel and transit rates are middling to lower than average. And shopping is a downright bargain.

Canadian currency, like U.S. currency, is denominated in **dollars and cents,** though there are some differences. Canada has no $1 bill, for example. Instead, Canadians use a $1 coin (called a "loonie" because it depicts a loon) and a $2 coin (sometimes called a "twoonie").

You'll **avoid lines at ATMs** and airports in eastern Canada by exchanging some money before you leave home. You can exchange money at your local American Express or Thomas Cook office, or at your bank. Exchange enough petty cash to cover airport incidentals, tipping, and transportation to your hotel before you leave home, or withdraw money upon arrival at an airport ATM (automated teller machine; see below).

If you're driving into Canada, you needn't worry about stocking up on Canadian dollars before or immediately upon entry into Canada. That's because **U.S. currency is widely accepted** here, especially in border towns, and you'll often see signs at cash registers announcing current exchange rates. These are not always the best rates, however, so it behooves you to visit an ATM or cash some traveler's checks as soon as you're able.

The easiest and best way to get cash right away in eastern Canada is from an **ATM machine,** sometimes referred to here as a "cash machine" or "cashpoint." They're widely available in most towns and cities. ATMs often offer the best exchange rates in Canada—avoid exchanging money at commercial exchange bureaus and hotels, which usually have the highest transaction fees. If your card uses the **Cirrus** (www.mastercard.com) or **PLUS** (www.visa.com) networks, you'll surely be able to find ATMs throughout eastern Canada that connect to your bank.

Remember that **many banks impose a fee** every time you use a card at another bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to US$5 or more) than for domestic ones. I've found that members of the Global ATM Alliance usually charge *no* transaction fees for cash withdrawals at fellow Alliance member ATMs; these include Bank of America in the U.S. and Scotiabank in eastern Canada.

So, if you have a BoA account, seek out Scotiabank ATMs.

Traveler's checks are another option. You can buy traveler's checks at most U.S. banks. They are offered in U.S. denominations of $20, $50, $100, $500, and sometimes $1,000. Generally, you'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%. The most popular traveler's checks are offered by **American Express** (✆ **800/528-4800**), **Visa** (✆ **800/847-2911**), and **MasterCard** (✆ **800/627-8372**); you'll pay fees for each. American Automobile Association (AAA) members can also obtain traveler's checks for relatively low fees (for checks up to US$1,500) at most AAA offices. Auto clubs in other countries sometimes offer similar services.

American Express, Thomas Cook, Visa, and MasterCard also offer **foreign currency traveler's checks** in Canadian dollars. They're accepted at some locations where U.S.-dollar checks may not be.

Finally, **credit cards** are one last safe way to get or spend money. They provide a convenient record of your expenses and generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can even withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs (provided you remember your PIN), though high fees can make these credit card cash advances a pricey way to get cash. Keep in mind that you'll pay interest from the moment of the cash advance withdrawal, even if you pay your monthly bills on time. Also, note that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% "transaction fee" on all credit card charges you incur abroad.

Credit cards that are more or less universally accepted in eastern Canada include Visa, MasterCard, Interac (a Canadian card), and American Express. Diners Club and Discover cards are accepted by a few merchants, but not many.

Remember to bring some cash, in any case: Many small establishments still accept no credit cards. This isn't New York City.

5 HEALTH

Canada is one of the safest, cleanest countries in the world; as such, traveling in eastern Canada doesn't pose any special health threats. Poisonous snakes? Sharks? Tropical diseases? Not here. And the food and water are very clean and safe to consume. Of course, you should still prepare for every eventuality anyway. Here are a few guidelines on how to do that.

GENERAL AVAILABILITY OF HEALTH CARE

Canada's health-care system is excellent; you shouldn't ever have trouble finding English-speaking medical help, unless you're in very remote areas of, for example, Newfoundland or Labrador. **Travel Health Online** (www.tripprep.com), sponsored by a consortium of travel medicine practitioners, can offer helpful advice on traveling abroad. The group maintains a relationship with one physician in the eastern provinces, Dr. Frank Lo in Halifax. In addition, **The International Society of Travel Medicine** (www.istm.org) lists one affiliated travel clinic on PEI and another in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Drugstores & Pharmacies

Chain drugstores and independent pharmacies are located throughout Atlantic Canada. Stores in larger cities and towns are likely to be open later than those in more remote villages. One of the larger national chains is **Pharmasave** (www.pharmasave.com), with about 70 stores in the four provinces (though most of them are in Nova Scotia).

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET SICK AWAY FROM HOME

If you become sick in Canada, you may very well need to pay all your medical costs upfront and seek reimbursement later. Medicare and Medicaid, for example, do not provide coverage for medical costs outside the U.S. Before leaving home, find out what medical services your health insurance covers. To protect yourself, consider buying medical travel insurance. (See "Insurance" in the "Fact Facts" chapter, p. 327.)

Remember that very few health insurance plans pay for medical evacuation back to the U.S. (which can cost US$10,000 and up), but a number of companies offer medical evacuation services anywhere in the world. If you're ever hospitalized more than 150 miles from home (eastern Canada is more than 150 miles from *everywhere*), **MedjetAssist** (✆ **800/527-7478;** www.medjetassistance.com) will pick you up and fly you to the hospital of your choice virtually anywhere in the world in a medically equipped and staffed aircraft 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Annual memberships are US$250 for an individual, US$385 for a family; you can also purchase shorter-term memberships starting at about US$100.

Pharmacies are easy to find in eastern Canada (see above). Still, if you suffer from a chronic illness, consult your doctor before your departure. Pack **prescription medications** in your carry-on luggage, and carry them in their original containers, with pharmacy labels—otherwise they won't make it through airport security. Carry the generic name of prescription medicines, in case a local pharmacist is unfamiliar with the brand name.

Additional **emergency numbers** are listed in the "Fast Facts" chapter, p. 326.

MEDICAL INSURANCE

Canadians are covered when traveling within Canada. However, most U.S. health plans (including Medicare and Medicaid) do *not* provide coverage for travel to Canada, and the ones that do often require you to pay for services upfront and reimburse you only after you return home.

As a safety net, if you're a U.S. citizen, you may want to buy **travel medical insurance,** particularly if you're traveling to a remote or high-risk area where emergency evacuation might be necessary. See "Fast Facts," p. 327, for more information on purchasing insurance.

6 SAFETY

The towns and cities of Atlantic Canada are small, well policed, and generally safe. Rowdies and drunks may occasionally be annoying or even a bit threatening, especially late on weekend nights in downtown neighborhoods, but serious crime is extremely rare in eastern Canada.

Nonetheless, whenever you're traveling in an unfamiliar place in this region, stay alert, be aware of your immediate surroundings, and take precautions, such as locking your car and hotel room and not walking alone in dark, unpopulated urban areas late at night. Try not to drive late at night when there's likely to be no one else out on the road if you run into trouble. And **carry a cellphone** at all times if you have one; coverage in eastern Canada certainly isn't thorough, but it is improving year by year.

The emergency number for eastern Canada is ✆ **911** throughout, the same as it is in the United States.

7 SPECIALIZED TRAVEL RESOURCES

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Canada has made tremendous efforts toward eliminating barriers to mobility for its citizens and, by extension, its tourist visitors. City pavements feature curb cuts for wheelchair travel, and larger hotels and airports sport wheelchair-accessible washrooms. A growing number of restaurants and tourist attractions are now designed for wheelchair accessibility as well, although room for improvement remains.

The **Canadian Paraplegic Association** (www.canparaplegic.org) runs a helpful website and also maintains an office in each of the four Atlantic provinces. In New Brunswick, call ✆ **506/462-9555;** in Nova Scotia, call ✆ **902/423-1277;** in Prince Edward Island, call ✆ **902/626-9523;** and in Newfoundland and Labrador, call ✆ **709/753-5901.**

Travelers with disabilities headed for Nova Scotia can also ask locally about accessible transportation and recreational opportunities by contacting the **Nova Scotia League for Equal Opportunities** (✆ **866/696-7536** or 902/455-6942; www.novascotialeo.org). The organization maintains a useful network of contacts throughout the province.

Some travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. One of the best is **Accessible Journeys** (✆ **800/846-4537** or 610/521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com), which can help you find a 10-day, wheelchair-accessible cruise touching Halifax and Saint John, for example.

Avis Rent a Car (✆ **888/879-4273;** www.avis.com/access) has a good "Avis Access" program that offers services for customers with special travel needs. These include specially outfitted vehicles with swivel seats, spinner knobs, panoramic mirrors, and hand controls; mobility scooter rentals; and accessible bus service. Be sure to reserve well in advance.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

Canada as a whole is considered extremely friendly to gay travelers. Eastern Canada varies from place to place in the warmth of the welcome, but the cities are uniformly accepting.

Halifax doesn't have any one especially "gay" district, but **GayHalifax** (http://gay.hfxns.org) is a good online starting point to help you find out what's going on locally with activists. And **Destination Halifax** (www.destinationhalifax.com/rainbow) is the best online guide to the city's gay events that I've yet seen.

SENIOR TRAVEL

Few countries are as attentive to the needs of seniors as Canada. Discounts are extended to people over 60 for everything ranging from public transportation to museum and movie admissions. Even many hotels, tour operators, and restaurants offer discounts, so don't be bashful about inquiring, but always carry some kind of identification that shows your date of birth. (It's always best to inquire before checking in or ordering.) This discount varies widely; in practice, the gap between senior prices and full price seems to be narrowing in recent years. But ask anyway.

Members of the **AARP** (✆ **888/687-2277;** www.aarp.org) get discounts when traveling to or in eastern Canada on hotels, airfares, and car rentals. AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone over 50 can join.

Elderhostel, now called **Exploritas** (✆ **800/454-5768;** www.exploritas.org) arranges worldwide study programs for those aged 55 and over. They manage

several great tours of Atlantic Canada, including a Nova Scotia-PEI combo (10 days) and a sweeping bus tour of Newfoundland (14 days). As a bonus, you can view the complete tour itinerary—including the actual inns and hotels you'll be staying in—online before laying down any cash.

FAMILY TRAVEL

Atlantic Canada is simply a great place to take the kids: It's safe, clean, and sprinkled with just enough amusements and outdoor jaunts to keep them engaged. The provinces vary, though, in their ability to entertain the young 'uns.

Prince Edward Island is the best destination for young girls, simply due to the proliferation of attractions related to *Anne of Green Gables.* **New Brunswick** abounds with easy adventuring (golfing, biking, kayaking, big-tide sightseeing, and so on), and it throws in a handful of amusement parks and museums (a chocolate museum? Natch) for good measure. **Nova Scotia** might frankly be a bit boring for the tykes, though—unless you've rented a cottage where they can swim, paddle, and hang out. And **Newfoundland and Labrador** is potentially great for teens with an interest in polar bears or icebergs (or science and ecology in general), but probably not much fun at all for parents with toddlers and infants—too many miles of open space in the car for a restless baby.

To locate accommodations, restaurants, and attractions that are particularly kid-friendly, refer to the "Kids" icon throughout this guide.

SINGLE TRAVELERS

Many reputable tour companies offer singles-only trips, and some of them dip into the Maritimes. **Singles Travel International** (✆ **877/765-6874;** www.singlestravelintl.com) offers singles-only escorted tours to faraway places like London, Alaska, Fiji, and the Greek Islands; in past years, its fall foliage cruise has touched down in Halifax.

The popular outfitter **Backroads** (✆ **800/462-2848;** www.backroads.com) offers active-travel trips to destinations worldwide, including several hiking, cycling, and kayak tours in Nova Scotia and a fun bike tour of Prince Edward Island.

Remember that on some package vacations to Canada, as a single traveler you might be hit with the dreaded "single supplement" to the base price. To avoid it, agree to room with other single travelers or find a compatible roommate before you go from a specialized roommate-locator agency.

8 SUSTAINABLE & RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

I love visiting eastern Canada, but I'd never want to see eastern Canada disappear just because a bunch of people like me visited it too much, or in the wrong way—loved it to death, as it were.

There are ways to help ensure this won't happen. Here's a primer on some current environmental issues in the region, plus some tips on traveling as "lightly" as possible.

FISHERIES

Fisheries have been *the* hot-button issue in eastern Canada since forever. This region depends upon fishing and shellfishing more than any other industry for both its economic lifeblood and its identity. Yet the native fishing stocks are seriously imperiled now, thanks to centuries of rampant overfishing; the national and provincial governments have enacted a series of

emergency rules preventing fishing of certain fish.

These restrictions make old-timers' blood boil, but they're probably a necessary poison if the fish are ever going to rebound and provide a living for their kids and grandkids.

What can you do? Signing up for a fly-fishing or deep-sea fishing expedition isn't any different from joining a fishing crew, so don't feel guilty if you do. Just act responsibly. Don't fish for more than you need to eat; catch and release, if possible, if you're not planning to eat any of the fish you catch. Do not throw any trash overboard. And don't use any illegal fishing methods to coax out a bigger catch. (If you see your tour operator doing so, don't patronize them again. And you might think about writing a letter to the provincial authorities after you get home.)

INDIGENOUS CULTURE

In Canada, they certainly don't refer to native peoples as "Indians," and they don't even call them "native Canadians;" as a sort of higher form of respect, they're referred to as members of the First Nation. There are native reserves in all four of the Maritime Provinces.

However, reservations in Canada are not the same as those in the United States. There are no casinos here, no public religious ceremonies, no tourist information kiosks, not even a single souvenir gift shop that I've been able to locate. In short: The native peoples of eastern Canada have decided they mostly want to be left alone.

Respect their wishes. If you pass through or past a marked reserve, do so respectfully. Don't snap photos of signs, people, houses, cars, or shops—it's just not cool.

However, all is not lost. You can view indigenous art at many art galleries in eastern Canada (at the Confederation Centre Art Gallery, p. 243, in Charlottetown, to give just one example), and numerous museums throughout the region display artifacts from native settlements—in St. John's, Newfoundland, for instance, The Rooms Provincial Museum is strong on indigenous history (see p. 315).

STAYING GREEN

Yes, it's pretty hard to claim you're being "green" while you're staying in a resort hotel that pumps water into three hundred rooms and also sprinkles it onto a golf course—or whose owners cleared off 20 acres of forest and marshlands to build it.

But you can minimize your impact as a traveler in eastern Canada. Here are just a few ways:

Stay in an accredited "green" hotel. Canada's official hotel association, the HAC, maintains a member-run "green" rating system called Green Key that assesses member hotels' practices, then assigns them a rating of two to five keys. This system doesn't differentiate a whole lot among properties—the vast majority of hotels and motels are rated at three keys, or "medium" greenness—but it might help you separate the greenest places from the least-green ones.

Interestingly, only one hotel in all of eastern Canada graded perfectly (five keys) on this scale: the **Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland** (p. 320). Visit the organization's website (www.greenkeyglobal.com) for more information.

Play golf on an eco-friendly course. Hundreds of courses in North America have been certified by the Audubon Society as wildlife sanctuaries, including about 80 in Canada. Of these, unfortunately, only two are located in eastern Canada, though both are visually stunning and historic: **Bell Bay** in Baddeck, Nova Scotia (p. 66) on Cape Breton and the **Algonquin Golf Course** in St. Andrews, New Brunswick (p. 168).

See the website of the organization **Golf & The Environment** (www.golfandenvironment.com) for more details.

Take public transit. Every major city in this book—from Halifax to Saint John to St. John's to Moncton—operates some form of metropolitan bus system. Use it.

Ride a bike. The parks of eastern Canada are unusually tailor-made for great bicycle riding. What's better than getting in shape and burning calories, while contributing exactly zero toxic emissions to the atmosphere? It's pretty hard to beat that for green travel.

I can personally vouch for the following destinations as superb cycling holidays: stretches of the **Cabot Trail** (p. 162) on Cape Breton Island (but watch carefully for touring cars); the outstandingly scenic **Fundy Trail Parkway** in New Brunswick (p. 167), which has a dedicated bike lane; and the **Confederation Trail** (p. 222), which stretches the entire length of Prince Edward Island—the best parts are in northeastern PEI, around the area of Mount Stewart.

Eat at restaurants that source locally. The use of hyper-local or regional produce, meats, and fish—this is Atlantic Canada, after all—contributes to the local economy and cuts down on pollution by cutting out the freighters, trucks, planes, trains, delivery vans, and refrigeration units required to ship and preserve foods over very long distance.

Luckily, numerous good restaurants in eastern Canada now use this philosophy: **Lot 30** in Charlottetown (p. 247) is one great example. Read my restaurant listings closely to find more examples.

Stay on the trail. Trails have boundaries for a reason: you're safer inside the trail (cliffs and handholds can crumble away in an instant), and sudden erosion is bad for a mountainside, because it creates a cascade effect: Each subsequent rain will wash more and more topsoil, forest duff, and nutrients off the hill, preventing future plant life from gaining a toehold (and the animals who depend on it). Stay on-trail.

RESPECTING THE 'BERGS & THE BEES

In eastern Canada you can get up close and personal with anything from a *Titanic*-sized iceberg with a polar bear on top of it to a sperm whale or a harbor seal. Sometimes outfitters even bring you right up beside the objects of your desire.

That might look cool in your video scrapbook, but it isn't necessarily best for the animal, whale, or landscape in question. Remember: These are wild animals, still unaccustomed to proximity with people.

Here are a few tips and resources for more respectful travel:

Don't collect. Resist the urge to collect things from the sea or forest. Pulling sea creatures out of the ocean and yanking up flowers for your hotel room (or your kids' aquarium back home) is both gauche and prohibited; sometimes the penalties can be very steep, approaching those for a federal crime.

Save the whales. Whale-watching is enduringly popular throughout the Maritime Provinces, but operators are lightly regulated; if you think your captain is heading too close in to the animals, complain (nicely but firmly). To learn more about the whales you'll be glimpsing, and how to respect them, before you get to Canada, visit the online resources of the **Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society** (www.wdcs.org).

Use a respectful outfitter. You can find more eco-friendly travel tips, statistics, and touring companies and associations—listed by destination under "Travel Choice"—at the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) website, **www.ecotourism.org**. **Ecotravel.com** is an online directory that also

provides a search for eco-friendly touring companies by category. **Conservation International** (www.conservation.org) is another useful resource. This organization presents annual awards to tour operators that have made significant contributions toward sustainable tourism. Take a look at the latest award-winners to see if any of them operate in eastern Canada.

Get educated. Finally, for more information on traveling lightly in general, check the websites of involved groups such as **Tread Lightly** (www.treadlightly.org) and **Responsible Travel** (www.responsibletravel.com).

General Resources for Green Travel

In addition to the resources for eastern Canada listed above, the following websites provide valuable wide-ranging information on sustainable travel. For a list of even more sustainable resources, as well as tips and explanations on how to travel greener, visit www.frommers.com/planning.

- **Responsible Travel** (www.responsibletravel.com) is a great source of sustainable travel ideas; the site is run by a spokesperson for ethical tourism in the travel industry. **Sustainable Travel International** (www.sustainabletravelinternational.org) promotes ethical tourism practices, and manages an extensive directory of sustainable properties and tour operators around the world.
- In Canada, **www.greenlivingonline.com** offers extensive content on how to travel sustainably, including a travel and transport section and profiles of the best green shops and services in Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary.
- **Carbonfund** (www.carbonfund.org), **TerraPass** (www.terrapass.org), and **Carbon Neutral** (www.carbonneutral.org) provide info on "carbon offsetting," or offsetting the greenhouse gas emitted during flights.
- **Greenhotels** (www.greenhotels.com) recommends green-rated member hotels around the world that fulfill the company's stringent environmental requirements. **Environmentally Friendly Hotels** (www.environmentallyfriendlyhotels.com) offers more green accommodation ratings. The **Hotel Association of Canada** (www.hacgreenhotels.com) has a Green Key Eco-Rating Program, which audits the environmental performance of Canadian hotels, motels, and resorts.
- Visit **www.eatwellguide.org** for tips on eating sustainably in the U.S. and Canada.
- For information on animal-friendly issues throughout the world, visit **Tread Lightly** (www.treadlightly.org). For information about the whales you'll be glimpsing (and how to respect them) off the Atlantic coast, visit the **Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society** (www.wdcs.org).
- **Volunteer International** (www.volunteerinternational.org) has a list of questions to help you determine the intentions and the nature of a volunteer program. For general info on volunteer travel, visit **www.volunteerabroad.org** and **www.idealist.org**.

9 SPECIAL-INTEREST TRIPS AND ESCORTED GENERAL INTEREST TOURS

LEARNING VACATIONS

The **Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts,** St. Ann's, NS (✆ **902/295-3411;** www.gaeliccollege.edu), offers programs for children and adults that specialize in local culture—such as Highland bagpiping, dancing, drumming, and Cape Breton fiddling—on its campus near Baddeck. The College also sometimes sponsors Elderhostel/Exploritas-associated programs and trips, such as half-day fall walking trips on Cape Breton Island.

At **Kings Landing,** near Fredericton, NB (✆ **506/363-4999;** www.kingslanding.nb.ca), children dress up in period costume and learn about how the early Loyalist settlers lived. The programs range from a few hours to a week, from early June through mid-October. Admission is charged to all visitors. Adult programs are also offered.

Sunbury Shores Arts & Nature Centre, St. Andrews, NB (✆ **506/529-3386;** www.sunburyshores.org), offers day- and weeklong trips and classes on various topics: plant dyes, printmaking, mosaic work, raku pottery, and watercolor and oil painting. Some summer classes and programs are specially geared toward children and teenagers. The center is located on the water in St. Andrews; lodging can be arranged locally, as well.

At **Village Historique Acadien,** near Caraquet, NB (✆ **877/721-2200** or 506/726-2600; www.villagehistoriqueacadien.com), the lives and arts of early Acadian settlers are the focus of programs held at a re-created historic village. The continuous program of events includes various skits, theatrical performances, storytelling sessions, and popular reenactments of typical events in the Acadian settlers' lives (such as the arrival of the mail, or the birth of a child). The historic village is open from early June through mid-September.

ADVENTURE TRAVEL

Adventure travel is now a growth industry in eastern Canada, and specialized adventure tour outfitters can be helpful if you're arriving by air—it's simply too much trouble for most of us to fly to Canada with our bikes, canoes, kayaks, and so forth.

Here's a sampling of well-regarded outfitters operating in Canada's Maritime Provinces.

- **Backroads,** Berkeley, CA (✆ **800/462-2848** or 510/527-1555; www.backroads.com): One of North America's largest adventure travel companies offers, for example, walking and biking trips through southeast Nova Scotia, among other programs in the eastern provinces. Pick according to your budget and inclination: You can stay at luxury inns or opt for more rustic camping trips.
- **Coastal Adventures,** Tangier, NS (✆ **877/404-2774** or 902/772-2774; www.coastaladventures.com): Sea kayak expert Scott Cunningham and his staff lead great trips ranging from 2-day paddles to weeklong adventures throughout the Maritimes and Newfoundland. Scott's a marine biologist and avid paddler who's been doing this for nearly 30 years; this is probably the top local outfit in eastern Canada for a paddle. His wife Gayle Wilson assists with everything—including the kayaking. Coastal also runs a local B&B, which is

convenient given how thin on the ground lodging is around here.

- **Freewheeling Adventures,** Hubbards, NS (✆ **800/672-0775** or 902/857-3600; www.freewheeling.ca): This popular outfitter based near Halifax offers excellent guided biking, kayaking, and hiking tours throughout Nova Scotia, as well as on Prince Edward Island and two challenging, exceptionally scenic areas of Newfoundland. It's operated by Cathy Guest, a former competitive cycler, who has been doing this since 1987. Freewheeling also has a reputation for traveling lightly. It's top rate.

ESCORTED GENERAL-INTEREST TOURS

You can alternately choose to take an escorted tour of eastern Canada, a structured group tour with a leader. The price of this kind of tour usually includes everything from airfare to hotels, meals, tours, admission costs, and local transportation.

Despite the fact that these tours require big deposits—and predetermine all your hotels, restaurants, and itineraries—some travelers enjoy the structure they offer. Basically, you sit back and enjoy the trip without having to worry about planning (or local transportation). Be aware that such tours usually bring groups to a large number of famous sights in a short time, without lingering much. They're especially convenient for people with limited mobility, and can be a great way to make new friends. (On the downside, you get little opportunity for spontaneous interactions with locals; the tours tend to leave little room for individual sightseeing; and you won't see "off the beaten track" spots.)

Two firms offer especially good escorted tours of eastern Canada.

- **Maxxim Vacations,** St. John's, NF (✆ **800/567-6666** or 709/754-6666; www.maxximvacations.com): A big travel package outfit based in Newfoundland? Yes. The province's largest travel provider has a top-rate reputation and offers a huge range of trips throughout the four Atlantic Provinces, just as you'd expect, including plenty of both guided and unguided excursions. From a "PEI Golf Getaway" to a "Romantic New Brunswick" (thankfully unescorted) tour, Scott and Judy Sparkes' family-owned company offers it all, professionally and well. And the prices of your tours helpfully come with airfare from your home city already factored into the equation. Call and ask for their extensive and colorful brochure.
- **Collette Vacations,** Pawtucket, RI (✆ **800/340-5158;** www.collettevacations.com): Collette offers a number of excellent tours of eastern Canada (about 10 days each, on average) that range from fly/drive packages to the escorted everything's-done-for-you variety throughout the Maritimes. Sample tour names include "Canada's Atlantic Coast Featuring the Cabot Trail" (touching three provinces); "Hidden Treasures of the Maritimes" (which *does* bring in some lesser-known sights); and "Natural Newfoundland and Legendary Labrador" (which is pretty self-explanatory). Additional side trips—such as to lovely Conception Bay, Newfoundland—are even possible on Collette tours for an extra fee, but note that your airfare isn't included in the quoted base package prices. In addition to the Rhode Island HQ, this company maintains satellite offices in suburban Toronto, Vancouver, and London—helpful if you happen to live in one of those three cities.

Though they're used less and less, pay phones are still scattered throughout Atlantic Canada and are self-explanatory. Local calls cost from C25¢ to C50¢. Calls made to the United States or elsewhere abroad on a pay phone can be very pricey; bring a calling card, and check in advance to be sure it works in Canada and what the per-minute rates will be to the U.S. or other countries. You can also ask locally at drugstores and convenience stores for home-grown Canadian versions of prepaid calling cards, which usually offer a much better rate for calling long distance than feeding coins into a phone. (There might be a "setup" or per-call fee hidden in the cost of such cards, however.)

The United States and Canada are on the same long-distance system. To make a long-distance call between the United States and Canada (in either direction), simply dial ✆ **1** first, then the area code and number. It's no different from calling long-distance in the United States.

Remember that numbers beginning with 888 and 866 in Canada are toll-free—so some of these numbers won't work if they're dialed from outside Canada. Just the same, some toll-free numbers in the U.S. won't work if they're dialed from Canada.

CELLPHONES

Yes, Virginia, U.S. cellphones work in Canada. But you'll pay roaming and long-distance charges that can push call costs above the US$1 per-minute level. Fortunately, the large U.S. carriers offer tack-on Canadian calling plans that reduce your roaming and long-distance charges while making calls from within Canada. (However, see below for a cautionary note.) Check with your carrier about switching on one such plan for the duration of your trip—without any penalties for switching it back off after you get back home.

You should be able to make and receive calls in all the populated areas of eastern Canada, assuming your cellphone works on a GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) system or you have a world-capable multiband phone. In the U.S., **T-Mobile** and **AT&T Wireless** (which includes customers of the former **Cingular**) use the quasi-universal GSM system; **Sprint** and **Verizon** don't. In Canada, **Microcell** and some **Rogers** customers are GSM. All **European** and most **Australian** phones come GSM-ready. GSM phones function with a removable plastic SIM card, encoded with your phone number and account information.

To use the phone in Canada, simply call your wireless carrier before leaving home and ask for "international roaming" to be activated on your account. Again, per-minute charges can be high, even if you do subscribe to some form of extended calling plan or international add-on plan that includes Canadian minutes.

If your cellphone doesn't work at all in Canada or is prohibitively expensive to use, **renting a Canadian cellphone** is another option. While you can rent a phone from any number of overseas sites, including kiosks at Canadian airports and car-rental agencies, it's usually best to rent the phone before you leave home. Check your local phone book or the internet for wireless rental companies operating in your area.

Such phone rentals aren't cheap, however. You'll pay a weekly rental fee, plus (sometimes) required phone insurance fees, plus airtime fees (sometimes up to a dollar a minute). And you might have to pay to ship the phone back at the end of your trip, though this cost is increasingly picked up by the renters. Ask carefully about what you will pay to use the phone inside Canada, both calling within

Canada and when calling the U.S. or to another country.

Buying a Canadian cellphone is one last option, and might be economically attractive if you can locate a cheap prepaid phone system. Stop by a local cellphone shop in Halifax or wherever you're arriving and ask about the cheapest package; you'll probably pay less than C$100 for a phone and a starter calling card. Local calls might be as low as C10¢ or C20¢ per minute.

A final note on **service coverage in eastern Canada:** These provinces are very thinly populated—and as such, cell towers are few and far between. You will not be able to use your cellphone everywhere you go; even driving the Trans-Canada Highway, you'll pop in and out of service for stretches. In the major cities, you will always be reliably connected; in the smaller towns, sometimes; and, in the wilderness of the big national and provincial parks, I doubt it.

Keep a phone on hand at all times for emergencies, but don't expect it to work anywhere and everywhere. And charge your battery every night if you can. *Definitely* ask park rangers about cell coverage before you venture into the backcountry.

VOICE OVER INTERNET PROTOCOL (VOIP)

If you have access to the Web while traveling, you might consider a broadband-based telephone service (in technical terms, **Voice over Internet Protocol,** or **VoIP**) such as **Skype** (www.skype.com) or **Vonage** (www.vonage.com), which allows you to make free international calls if you use their services from your laptop or in a cybercafe.

INTERNET AND E-MAIL

Without Your Own Computer

Cities like Halifax and Charlottetown are rife with Internet cafes; anywhere else, it's catch-as-catch-can—but many towns in eastern Canada now sport at least one cybercafe. (Hey, even fishermen and sailors need to check e-mail while in port these days.) It might double as the town laundry/coffee shop, but it'll be there somewhere.

Most airports have **Internet kiosks** that provide basic Web access for a per-minute fee that's usually higher than cybercafe prices. Check out copy shops like **FedEx Kinko's,** which offers computer stations with fully loaded software (as well as Wi-Fi).

Many **public libraries** in Canada also offer Internet access free or for a small charge—you might have to surrender a piece of ID first. Most **youth hostels** in Canada also have at least one computer with Internet access, though there is just a thimbleful of hostels in the Maritimes—Halifax has one. But avoid hotel business centers unless you're desperate; you'll usually pay exorbitant hourly rates.

With Your Own Computer

Most laptops sold today have built-in wireless capabilities. More and more hotels, resorts, airports, cafes, retailers, and even entire cities are going **Wi-Fi,** becoming "hotspots" that offer free high-speed Wi-Fi access or charge a small fee for usage. Sometimes an entire community will be blanketed by coverage—the city of **Fredericton,** New Brunswick, for instance, has won national awards for its free city-wide Wi-Fi network—but that's rare.

A hotel in eastern Canada is virtually guaranteed to offer Wi-Fi access; a motel, inn, or B&B in the region is about 50% likely to have it; coffee shops offer Wi-Fi in ever-increasing numbers; and even some campgrounds are now wired. Keep in mind that you'll often have to pay for the privilege, though: Wi-Fi is not always free. It's a good idea to **search for Wi-Fi hotspots** ahead of time—there are various websites and mobile phone applications that can do this for you.

In some areas or hotels, though, there's no Wi-Fi and you'll be forced to connect to the Internet via much slower **dial-up access.** Most business-class hotels in Canada still offer a form of dataport to help laptop modems connect to a phone line. (But don't expect a phone in your room if you're staying at a B&B in eastern Canada.) Business hotels will also sometimes loan or rent a **connection kit** for around C$10, but again: Don't expect this service at inns or B&Bs. To be safe, bring your own connection kit. That means the right power and phone adapters (if needed), a spare phone line (easy to find at electronics shops), and a spare Ethernet network cable (ditto). Or find out whether your hotel supplies such items to guests by calling ahead.

All Canadian hotels, inns, and private homes use the same phone jacks and electrical current as the United States: Electricity is 110–115 volts, 60 cycles. If you're traveling from the U.S., you won't need adapters for your plugs. Coming from anywhere else, you probably will.

11 TIPS ON ACCOMMODATIONS

Eastern Canada is a unique region, with a unique set of lodgings. You won't find many five-star resorts here, but rather a more homey hospitality—a patchwork of B&Bs, simple country inns, motels, and aging chain and business hotels. Just downgrade your expectations a bit, focus on Mother Nature, and you'll be fine.

But this isn't a complete lodgings wasteland. Here and there, genuinely luxe resorts and inns appear out of the mist, serving amazing meals and offering top-tier rooms furnished in antiques and Jacuzzis.

Here's a primer on the region's lodging situation.

CANADA SELECT RATINGS

One of the joys of booking travel to eastern Canada is the useful ratings service supplied and constantly updated online (for free) by the Canadian government, a ratings system known as **Canada Select.**

Even better, you can view these ratings without leaving the comfort of your own home thanks to the Internet. Go to the website **www.canadaselect.com** to view their very complete listings and ratings.

It has to be said, however, that this system is *different* from Frommer's star-rating system, and completely unrelated to it. I have used my own judgment when assigning star ratings in this guide, without regard to the Canadian government's ratings.

Nevertheless, they can provide a useful yardstick. The Canada Select system assigns a star value to each property, based on the various amenities supplied at a property (somewhat like the AAA's rating system for hotels and motels in North America).

The specific Canada Select rating system goes as follows:

- **One-star properties** are considered to offer "clean and well-maintained accommodations" and "the necessary facilities for an enjoyable stay." Inspectors check for and must find an adequately sized room, plus working window screens and coverings, closets, linens, door locks, smoke detectors, and parking facilities.
- **Two-star accommodations** are considered mid-range by Canada Select. Everything here must be better than that at a one-star property: the mattresses, linens, window and wall coverings, carpets, lighting, furniture, and parking.
- **Three stars,** says Canada Select, indicates an "above average" property with

larger individual rooms, extra pieces of room furniture, coordinated decor, better-quality mattresses and linens, an alarm clock, and extra bath products in the bathrooms. All rooms in a three-star B&B must come with private bathrooms.

- A **four-star rating** indicates an "exceptional" property and services, with "superior quality throughout" the rooms, bathrooms, and common areas. These properties will usually have laundry services, and lots of extra amenities.
- The **five-star rating** is reserved for properties that are "luxurious at a world standard," with "outstanding facilities, guest services, and amenities."

It needs to be said, though, that this rating system isn't perfect—and, in fact, it doesn't really reflect what I've seen out there in the field in eastern Canada.

For example, there are 21 Canada Select five-star properties in the four eastern provinces at this writing. Only *one* of these 21 properties appears in this guide and with Frommer's top rating (three stars). On the other hand, nearly all my top three-star picks are rated at less than five stars by Canada Select, or else they don't appear at all.

There are at least two reasons for these discrepancies: First, not all properties in Canada are members of Canada Select. (Properties have to pay a fee.) The majority of places join because it's tremendously useful as a marketing tool, so a Relais & Châteaux–affiliated property in New Brunswick, for example—a five-star experience by every possible measure—simply wouldn't bother joining, because they don't need the marketing boost.

Second, Canada's hotel inspectors seem to be looking for inclusion (of breakfast, dinner, alarm clocks, parking lots, and so on) first, quality second. A place missing one thing on a long checklist might be demoted a star or two, even if it's great.

TYPES OF ACCOMMODATIONS IN EASTERN CANADA

Here are the various categories of lodgings you'll find in eastern Canada, as defined and classified by Canada Select.

BED AND BREAKFASTS Very common in eastern Canada, the B&B (code: BB) must satisfy certain minimum requirements to be listed with Canada Select: inside entry to at least half the rooms, no more than three shared bathrooms, personalized service from the owner or innkeeper, and a three-item continental breakfast as a minimum. Further subcategories distinguish "bed and breakfast inns" (BBI), which must have five or more rooms; "tourist homes" (BB/TH), which aren't required to supply any breakfast at all; and "farm vacation" (FV) B&Bs, which must be located on fully operating farms.

Everyone has dreamed of staying in a cute B&B on vacation, and indeed the majority of places I've visited and listed in this book probably fall into this category. They range from three-star experiences to places so simple I have included them but assigned no stars at all. These places are adequate sleeps, no more than that.

Also note that Canada Select's idea of an included "breakfast" can mean anything from a croissant, a box of packaged breakfast cereal, a doughnut, or a plate of fruit (usually referred to as a Continental breakfast) to a buffet spread or even a choice of gourmet, fresh-cooked items (usually referred to in this book as a "full" breakfast).

COTTAGES According to the Canadian government, cottages (code: C) must have exterior doors and either Continental breakfast service or full kitchens.

There are numerous cottages for rent in Canada's eastern provinces, at all price levels, and these can be one of the very

best ways to see the region, especially for a family. You save money because you can cook, and the cottages are usually set in a lovely natural setting (beside the sea, overlooking fields or a golf course, and so on).

On the downside, however, they are somewhat lightly regulated in these provinces, vary wildly in quality, and change details (owners, phone numbers, open status) from year to year. So I haven't included many of these in my recommended picks.

The provinces each keep detailed lists of cottages, though—so contact the provincial tourist offices in the places you're going for lots more info, pictures, and listings. Nova Scotia does an especially good job of collecting and publishing cottage listings in its *Doers' & Dreamers' Guide.*

HOTELS AND MOTELS Hotels and motels (code: H/M) are lumped together in the same general category by Canada Select. Pretty much the only requirement is that the facility has four or more units.

In practice, these vary so much in eastern Canada that I hardly know where to begin. Check my rankings closely. Also be aware that, at some point, you might end up in a chain hotel that's boring as bread. It happens, especially in smaller cities and towns, when the few good options (those cute B&Bs are usually pretty small) are all filled up. Bring a book and your laptop; you'll survive, because chain hotels at least do deliver basic services—a gym, an Internet connection, a breakfast room, a bellboy—that rural country inns and B&Bs often can't provide.

INNS According to Canada Select, inns (code: I) must have "inside access" for at least 50% of the rooms and provide "personalized hospitality." The owners or innkeepers must live separately from the guest section, and they must serve a Continental or full breakfast, with a minimum of three items, plus dinner.

There are plenty of inns in the eastern provinces, but I'd quibble with many of the rankings assigned to them by the ratings board. I can tell you from experience that at least some of them are aging and fading. Again, check the Frommer's ratings throughout this book for my choices.

RESORTS According to Canada Select, a "resort" (code: R) must have four or more rooms in a main building, a full-service dining room, and some form of recreational facility (sports equipment, a pool, a spa, a fitness club—something).

Once again, there's sometimes a gap between appearance and reality. I've seen many a place in eastern Canada describe itself as a "resort," when in fact a quick glance at the building made it clear that it was anything but. Read my reviews carefully before booking.

YOUTH HOSTELS There are very few youth hostels in eastern Canada anymore (there used to be more), but I've found them to be generally pretty decent, especially the urban hotels. (Canada Select does not list or rate youth hostels.) I have listed just a few in this guidebook, because the quality can vary tremendously, but I can recommend the hostels in both Halifax and St. John's without hesitation. If you don't mind the communal atmosphere and possibly doing a few chores before checkout, budget-conscious travelers should give them a look.

Note that youth hostels once imposed an age limit on their guests (usually 25 or 26), but they no longer do in all except a few European countries.

The central office for "official" hostels in Canada is in Ottawa. Contact **Hostelling International-Canada** (✆ **613/237–7884**) by mail at 205 Catherine Street, Suite 400, Ottawa, ON K2P 1C3, or check its website at **www.hihostels.ca**.

There are also some very good "independent" hostels, with no affiliation at all, in places like Digby.

UNIVERSITY DORMITORIES In summer, when Canada's universities and colleges are (mostly) on break, many institutions open up their dorm rooms and communal spaces to traveling families for daily or weekly rentals. These rooms are almost uniformly spartan (don't expect Jacuzzis and marble vanities; these are students' rooms), inexpensive, and you often get the use of a private or shared kitchen in the deal. Dorm rooms are especially prevalent in Halifax, but you can find them in other cities in eastern Canada as well.

HOUSE RENTALS Renting a house is also an option in the Maritimes, though it's far, far easier to rent a cottage. Once again, check with the **tourist offices** of these provinces to get a sense about the situation.

Another trick I've tried is to scour the listings of the **top realtors** in a given area. They often rent prime homes that are still on the market on a short-term basis—and sometimes "short-term" can be as short as 1 week.

Suggested Itineraries in the Atlantic Provinces

The eastern provinces of Canada are big, yet intimate. You can be a long way between major destinations only to find yourself suddenly overwhelmed with joy when you happen upon a small wooden church, fish stand, a rock outcropping—and you end up staying longer there than you intended. I've seen it happen time and again.

So I have two pieces of advice. First, leave a bit of flexibility in your itinerary, because the provinces are full of these little unexpected surprises. You'd hate to leave Lunenburg without jumping onto a whale-watching boat, or right on the eve of the fisherman's festival, right? Second, allow yourself time for the long drives—better yet, bring a companion who can share the load. Except when in Prince Edward Island, you'll log a lot of hours on the road to complete these tours. The provinces are big, and superspeedways are rare.

The range of possible itineraries in eastern Canada is practically endless (you could do a kayaking itinerary, or a French-towns itinerary, for example), but I've focused on a few of my favorite places in this chapter. Even a month is not enough to see all of the Maritime Provinces, but these four itineraries touching on the "greatest hits" of each province should get you started.

LIGHTS OUT — THE BEST OF NOVA SCOTIA IN 1 WEEK

This tour takes in lighthouses, quaint villages, a surprisingly vibrant city, and dramatic headlands plunging to the ocean. Begin in Yarmouth, landing point for fast ferries from Portland and Bar Harbor, Maine.

Day ❶: The Southernmost Coast

You could pass an hour in **Yarmouth,** the compact port city that receives ferries from Maine. It offers a few diversions, such as a **Firefighters' Museum** (p. 85) and a French-speaking region just a short drive to the west. It's not worth more than a half-day, though. Instead, I like to drive the coastline just west of the city, which harbors several relatively unknown (and thus nearly always empty) beaches, at the edge of the Acadian Coast. See p. 83.

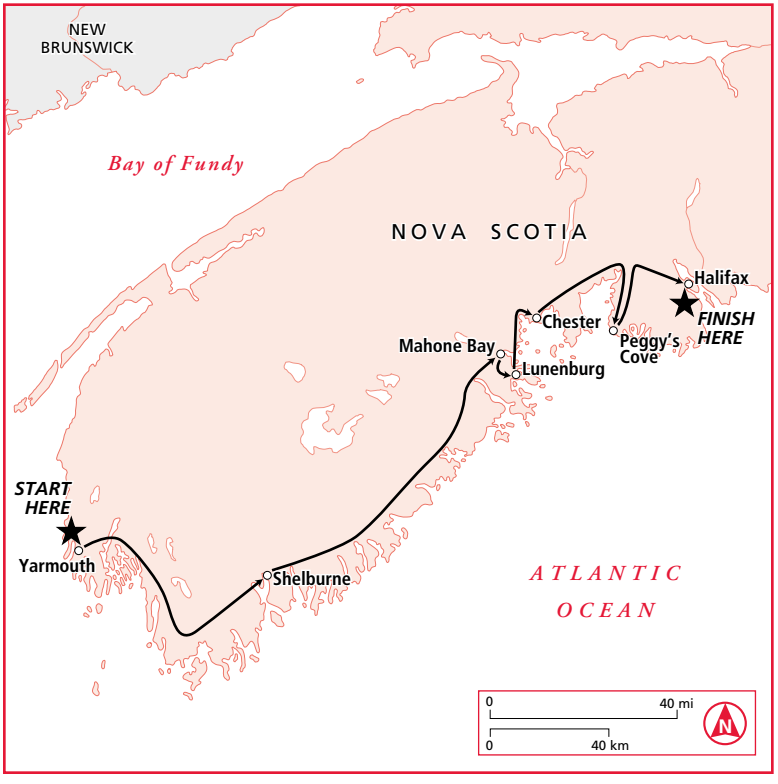
Drive about 100km (62 miles) east along Route 103, exiting the main highway to reach **Shelburne** ★. This compact little town has a fine **historic complex** with water views, a cooper, boatbuilders, and a few small museums. There's also a more commercial main street and one of my favorite fish-and-chips stands in the province, the aptly named **Mr. Fish.** See p. 90.

Continue another 120km (75 miles) east along Route 103 to the exit for Route 324; exit and continue about 10km (6¼ miles) east to

Days ❷–❹: Mahone Bay ★★ and Lunenburg ★★

These cute twin harbor towns, separated by just a 15-minute drive, are easily worth 2 to 3 nights to explore together. (You'll

Nova Scotia in 1 Week



probably arrive late on the first day, anyway.) You can explore remote peninsulas—preferably by bike—hit the links, visit a great museum, or book a kayak tour. Some wonderful bed-and-breakfasts are tucked into these towns, too. I like to time my visit to coincide with one of the summertime fisherman's, arts, or music festivals. See p. 90 for Lunenburg details and p. 97 for Mahone Bay.

While here, also be sure to follow Route 3 about 10km (6¼ miles) northeast of Mahone Bay to **Chester** ★★ (p. 99). This little port town is also New England–cute, with a scenic, first-rate golf course or two, a little summer theater company, a clutch of restaurants, and a ferry service to nearby **Tancook Island.** (Get a schedule so you don't miss the last boat back.) It's worth a couple hours, for sure.

From Lunenburg, Mahone Bay, or Chester, head northeast along Route 3 or Route 103 about 24km (15 miles) to the turnoff for Route 333.

Days ❺–❼: The Halifax Region

Down Route 333 about 24km (15 miles) lies **Peggy's Cove** ★★★. This famously picturesque village features a lighthouse, surf crashing on rocks, a somber memorial to a plane crash, and more cute souvenirs than you can shake a stick at. Sure, you can take a tour bus from Halifax, but why not just visit it yourself on the drive up? It's worth an hour or two; bring cameras. See p. 122.

From Peggy's Cove, backtrack 24km (15 miles) to the main highway, then continue north about 24km (15 miles) along Route 103 to **Halifax** ★★★. This is Nova Scotia's crown jewel, a place where live bands play nightly, buskers sing in the streets, and there's plenty of grog and museum-going to be had. It's not a huge place, and you'll quickly cover all of it, but the lodging and dining are good enough that it's worth several nights. Be sure to explore the **Maritime Museum of the Atlantic,** especially for the Titanic artifacts, and **Pier 21** (p. 108), for a look at the immigrant experience in eastern Canada. Or just wander up and down **Spring Garden Road** and back and forth along **Barrington Street,** hunting for brewpubs, record shops, and old buildings. You *will* eat well at night.

Bored with the bright lights? Head for a remote beach down a nearby peninsula, such as **Crystal Crescent Beach;** there are plenty, but you'll need a map to find the way. And roads are a bit rough on the suspension.

From here, rise early and you can speed back down the highway south to Yarmouth in time to catch your ferry back to Maine. Be sure not to dally, though—the 338km (210-mile) drive takes more than 3 hours.

HIGH TIMES, HIGH TIDES IN THE BEST OF NEW BRUNSWICK 1 WEEK

New Brunswick is spread out; to see it quickly and compactly, this tour takes in the highlights of the southernmost New Brunswick coast, from the province's largest city to its biggest tidal drops. Begin at St. Andrews, the first significant destination beyond the Maine state line. (I'm assuming you've driven north from Maine. If you've flown into Saint John, see it first or last and tinker with the order below a bit.)

Days ❶ & ❷: St. Andrews ★★

This compact seaside town is the perfect stopping point after driving miles and miles of empty downeast Maine roads. It's worth at least a night for shopping and walking, another day and a night if you're intent on taking a whale-watching trip or other excursion from the harbor—or playing the **Algonquin Hotel's golf course** (p. 168), one of the top courses in eastern Canada.

A day trip to the nearby islands, such as **Deer Island** or **Campobello** (p. 170), is always nice in summer.

From St. Andrews, continue about 19km (12 miles) northeast (do not backtrack) along Route 127 to Route 1, the main road. Then continue 80km (50 miles) along Route 1 to

Days ❸ & ❹: Saint John ★

Saint John (spelled out, please) isn't the capital of New Brunswick, but it is the province's chief economic engine. The central square downtown is lovely, and good for hanging out in; you can also wander downtown's grid of streets, choosing from gourmet and midpriced restaurants or pubs with ale and live music. See p. 182.

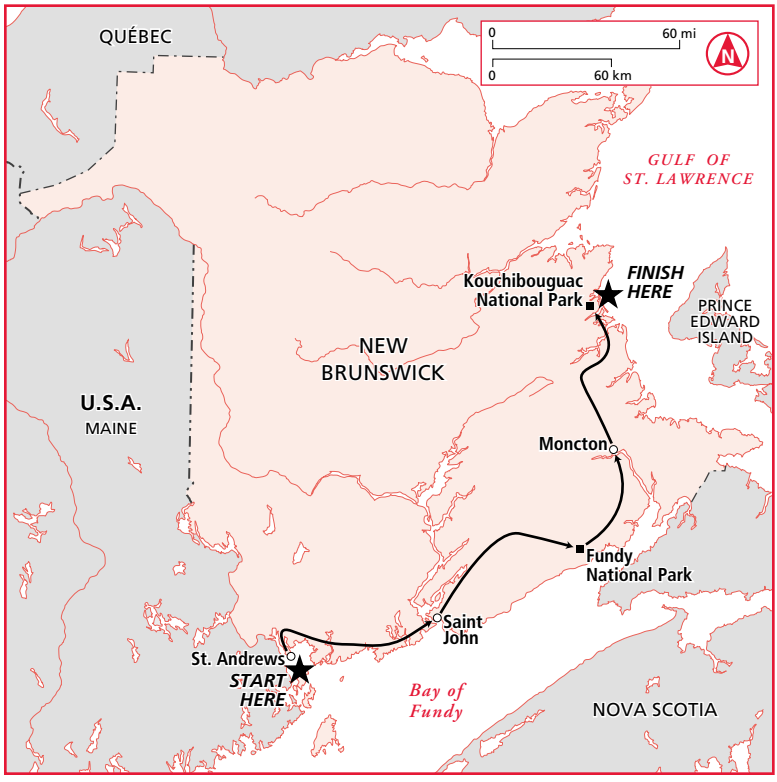
The **city market,** also within walking distance, is a must-visit if you like fresh produce and good food.

From Saint John, continue about 90km (56 miles) northeast along Route 1 to Route 114; turn south along Route 114 and continue 15km (9⅓ miles) to its end, which puts you in

Days ❺ & ❻: Fundy National Park ★★

One of the most surprising things you can do in New Brunswick is hightail it to this park, where the world's highest tides are formed by the narrowing "V" of the **Bay of Fundy.** Any number of tour outfits can

New Brunswick in 1 Week



take you down to the waterside (tide schedules in hand, of course). The weirdly shaped **Hopewell Rocks** make a good trip, and there's also an excellent road/hiking path along the bay. This is worth a day or two with the family—you'll have to stay in rustic accommodations, however, as there are no true resorts around here—who can enjoy some time on the bike or on a hike, too. See p. 203.

From the park, continue north along Route 114 80km (50 miles) to

Day 7: Moncton

This city at the crossroads of the Maritimes is showing new signs of life. Stay the night and use the city as a base for a day trip, or else press on to the big park an hour away. See p. 205.

Head 80km (50 miles) north, following routes 115 and 11, passing the big **Dune of Bouctouche** en route, to **Kouchibouguac National Park** ★★ (p. 209), where you can canoe, bike, or kayak, and the flat land makes for easy walking (or picnicking on the beach). Return to Moncton at night, or just camp overnight in the park.

From Moncton, you're just 80km (50 miles) from the bridge to Prince Edward Island (see next itinerary) or a few hours from further coastal exploring. Or return south 266km (165 miles) along Highway 1 to the Maine border, about a 3½-hour trip.

This tour takes in a trifecta of the island's essential sights, giving each its due: Charlottetown, Anne's Land, and the lovely beaches of Prince Edward Island National Park. Kids will love all three places, and adults will feel a sense of tranquility they may not have known in years.

Days ❶ & ❷: Victoria ★★ and Charlottetown ★★

Little **Victoria** makes a cute stop en route to the province's "big city." An hour or two and a cup of tea ought to do it, unless you're in the mood for some theater. See p. 260.

Take the Trans-Canada Highway 32km (20 miles) farther east to **Charlottetown.** The island's capital city has excellent restaurants, inns, a lot of history, and a plain friendly feel. Stay the night, or for several nights. Family activities here include the **Confederation Centre Art Gallery** (p. 243), which offers a constantly changing program of plays and performances (including an annual run of an *Anne of Green Gables* play).

There's also excellent window-shopping and a surfeit of parks in which to push baby strollers or exercise a pet. See p. 240.

From Charlottetown, follow signs west along Route 2 to Route 13, then turn north and follow Route 13 to

Day ❸: Anne's Land ★

The village of **New Glasgow** makes a good stop while heading back to the center of the island. There's a championship golf course, nice views from the country roads looping over hillsides, and the **Prince Edward Island Preserve** factory (p. 232), complete with a store and a good cafe. Kids might enjoy sampling the jams. Give this stop an hour or two if you like jelly or just need a break from driving the slow island roads.

Continue north along Route 13 to **Cavendish** ★ (p. 225), the island's most tourist-friendly and developed (many would say "overdeveloped") section. The fictional redheaded Anne of Green Gables is everywhere in this area, and some of the attractions related to her and the Anne books' authoress really are worth seeing—especially for young girls and their mothers. Not interested in all that? There are plenty of other touristy attractions for kids in and around the village, including amusement parks like the **Sandspit.**

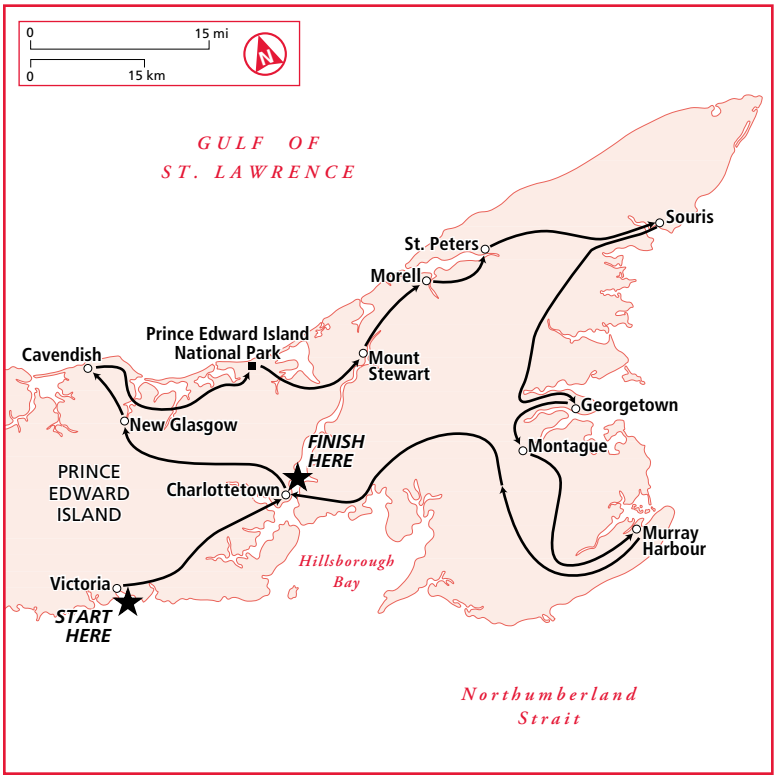
Where to stay? Numerous "bungalow courts" (small cottage compounds) dot the area, some with cooking facilities, good for frying up local fish, and little playgrounds, though my first choice might be to pitch a tent in the national park (see next entry). This area is definitely worth a day or two with children.

From Cavendish, turn east on Route 6 and travel, through a series of tricky turns, to Prince Edward Island National Park.

Days ❹–❻: Prince Edward Island National Seashore ★★★ & Souris ★

Some of the best beaches in eastern Canada line the northern shores of Prince Edward Island. You'll surely want to spend a few days here with the family walking the beach, snapping photos of glorious sunsets and purple lupines against the red sand, camping among the dunes, hunting down obscure fish-and-chips shops, and just generally kicking back.

You'll find a wide range of accommodations in these parts, from Victorian resorts to B&Bs to well-maintained campgrounds both within **Prince Edward Island National Park** and just outside it. Any family traveling in the Maritimes should camp together for at least a night; the quiet and fresh air should do you a world



of good. The placid surroundings and warm waters here invite relaxation. While staying in and around the park, remember to take some scenic drives as well.

From the park, continue east on Route 6 to Route 2, turning east and continuing about 60 scenic kilometers (37 miles) through the cute towns of **Mount Stewart, Morell,** and **St. Peters.**

Finally you come to **Souris** (p. 254). Some outstanding inns, scenery, and beaches lie near the postage-stamp town. If you're an outdoors sort of family, rent yourselves a bike or three and go exploring. Stay in a campground or in your pick of two of the island's most luxurious inns in the area.

On your way back to Charlottetown, nick the southeastern corner of PEI: Drop in on **Georgetown, Montague,** or **Murray Harbour,** each of which is worth a drive through (or even an overnight).

Locals are unfailingly nice throughout this island, an added bonus.

Return 80km (50 miles) along routes 2, 4, and 5 to

Day 7: Charlottetown ★★, Once More

I like **Charlottetown** a lot, and believe it's worth a repeat visit while making a circuit of PEI. You probably didn't see everything

on your first time through, anyway. Why not spend another night? Hit the **Confederation Court Mall** and wander the street snapping photos of the kids and look for souvenirs for friends.

ROLLING THROUGH THE ROCK IN THE BEST OF NEWFOUNDLAND 2 WEEKS

This tour of "The Rock" (a local nickname for Newfoundland) brings you to the capital city, but it also takes you to Viking ruins. In other words: I cover a lot of ground here. Be prepared to burn several tanks of gas and plenty of rubber. Bring coffee.

Days ❶–❸: St. John's ★★

Few places in North America are more convivial, seafaring, or musical than **St. John's.** You're absolutely required to have a pint (or fake it) in a local pub while trying to catch the local traditional music act. I'd say it's worth 3 nights of your time if you include some sort of excursion into the countryside; the area's many outfitters can help. See p. 311.

Drive north from St. John's about 160km (99 miles) on the Trans-Canada Highway (Hwy. 1), exiting at Clarenville and continuing 65km (40 miles) east on Route 230 to Route 239. Turn south on Route 239 and continue about 2km (1¼ mile) to the turnoff for

Days ❹–❺: Trinity ★★

Set in the land of icebergs, **Trinity** is a lovely town in an inaccessible place. You have to drive 72km (45 miles) down a side road off the already sparse Trans-Canada Highway just to get there; then do the same in reverse later. There's enough scenery here to eat. If it's iceberg season (that is, late spring), stay a few nights and watch for the big boys. Again, local outfitters can help you see them: Some run boats right out to the great icy masses. See p. 300.

Retrace your route back along Route 230 to the Trans-Canada Highway at Clarenville (save miles by cutting west on Rte. 233). Head north on the Trans-Canada, soon passing through

Day ❻: Terra Nova National Park ★

Terra Nova is a convenient stopping point on the way to Gros Morne (see below), but it's also a park with excellent family attractions—more than probably any other provincial or national park in eastern Canada. See p. 295.

Continue west along the Trans-Canada Highway about 420km (261 miles) to Deer Lake, then follow Route 430 further west to

Days ❼–❿: Gros Morne National Park ★★★

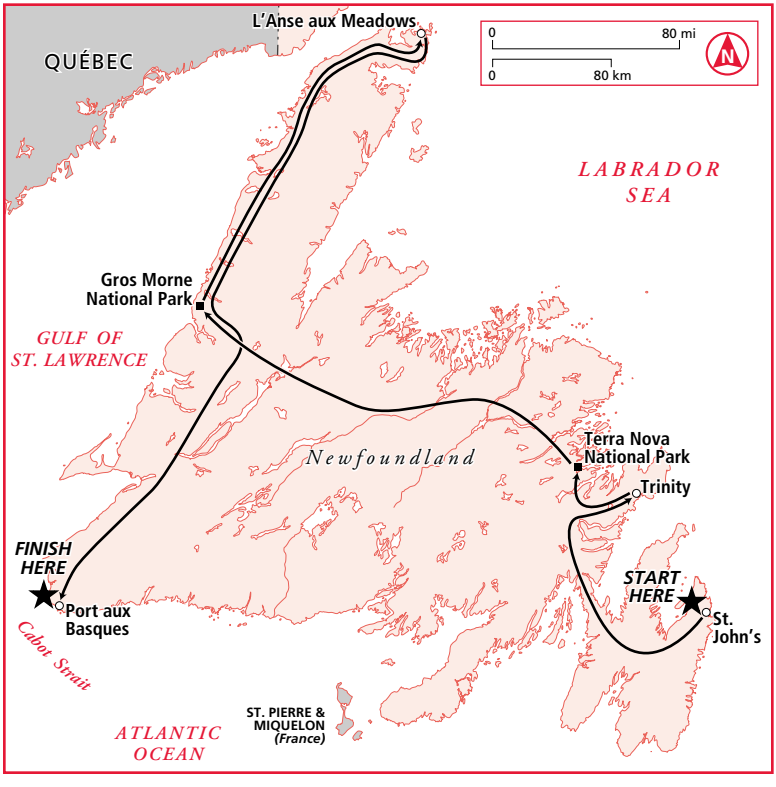
Gros Morne National Park is absolutely the one must-see place in Newfoundland, and if you go nowhere else, go here. You'll be tuckered out by the drive, but once here you'll realize what the big deal in the guidebooks was all about. Stay at least 2 (preferably more) nights right in the park, soaking up the atmosphere—not only to take in the stupendous sights (huge cliffs, waterfalls, beaches, Arctic flowers, snowshoe hares, and the like) but also to rest up for the long drive to your next wonderful destination. A true hiking enthusiast could probably spend a week here happily. See p. 277.

Drive about 338km (210 miles) north along Route 430 to the Route 436 turnoff. Continue about 9km (5½ miles) more to

Days ⓫–⓭: L'Anse aux Meadows ★★★

Eleventh-century **Viking artifacts** were discovered at Newfoundland's northernmost tip in 1960. This site—and the artifacts culled from it—are well worth a visit. See p. 287.

Newfoundland in 2 Weeks



Return about 400km (249 miles) along Route 430 to Deer Lake, then continue another 265 km (165 miles) along the Trans-Canada Highway (Hwy. 1) to

Day ⓮: Port aux Basques

Traveling to **Port aux Basques** will take you the better part of a day. This town is the docking point for another ferry that carries you back to Cape Breton Island. There's little to do here, and it's best used as a staging area—your last souvenir-grab on The Rock—before your passage back to Nova Scotia. See p. 271.

5

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia is more than just a pretty picture. Apparently humdrum on the surface, it resists characterization at every turn—and turns out to be friendly as all get-out. Sure, upon entry it feels much more cultured and British than wild, a better place to buy a wool sweater and shoot a round of golf than to actually get your feet wet. But then you stumble upon the blustery, boggy uplands and crags of Cape Breton Highlands National Park, and hear the wild strains of some local Celtic band's fiddling emanating from a tiny pub, and you start to realize that people here are both tougher than you thought and full of spunk—closer to Newfies, maybe, then Brits.

Yes, this is a place of rolling hills and cultivated farms, especially near the Northumberland Straits on the northern shore—but it's also got a vibrant, edgy arts and entertainment scene in Halifax, a city possessing more intriguing street life than plenty of cities three times its size. The place has been called a "San Francisco in miniature" (though it's really more like a small Boston).

This is a province that has truly earned its name—"Nova Scotia" is just grammar-school Latin for "New Scotland"—with Highland Games, kilts, and more than a touch of brogue. Yet it also possesses rich little enclaves of Acadian culture, both on the far shore of Cape Breton and along the southwestern coast between Digby and Yarmouth. (Want to see a really huge wooden church in the unlikeliest of places? It's here.)

But this province is also a good vacation for the sort of traveler who's not yet ready to tackle Nepal. You can do low-key Sunday drives here 7 days a week without a traffic jam. The scene changes almost kaleidoscopically as you wind along Nova Scotia's roads: from dense forests to bucolic farmlands, from ragged coastline cliffs to melancholy bogs, from historic villages with tall ships lazing about at port to dynamic little downtowns serving up everything from fish and chips and a pint to the occasional gourmet eatery. Pretty much the only terrain Nova Scotia doesn't offer is, well, desert.

In fact, the province is twice blessed. Many of the best parts are compact enough that you needn't spend all your time in a car—thanks, Halifax and the South Shore. Yet it has less than a million residents (and one in three live in Halifax), making most of it empty enough to provide lots of space when you're seeking a clear head and a nearly private beach. Even in the most thickly populated sections, it's still possible to feel a sense of remoteness here, of being surrounded by a big ocean and long, profound history.

More than once while traveling through the back roads of Nova Scotia, I've had the sense I was traveling through the New England of 60 or 70 years ago—the one that captivated writers and painters long before anyone referred to tourism as an "industry." I still get that sense here, sometimes—a sense of peace, quiet, and mannered culture. It's not gone, not yet, and with a little exploring you can find it, too.

1 EXPLORING NOVA SCOTIA

Visitors to Nova Scotia should spend a little time poring over a map (and this travel guide) before leaving home. It's a good idea to narrow down your options, because numerous loops, circuits, and side-trips are possible here—and the permutations only multiply once you factor in various ferry links to the United States, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland. You don't want to spread yourself *too* thin. So figuring out where to go—and how to get there—is the hardest work you'll need to do in a place that is quite easy to travel around once you've arrived there.

The only travelers who complain about Nova Scotia are those who tried to see it all at once, in a week. That sort of approach could leave you strung out and tired. Instead, prioritize your interests and decide accordingly.

Looking for picture-perfect scenes of coastal villages? Focus mostly on the South Shore, specifically the holy trinity of Chester, Lunenburg, and Mahone Bay. Drawn to hiking amid dramatic, rocky coastal vistas? Allow plenty of time for Cape Breton Island. Looking for more pastoral ocean scenery? Head for the Fundy Coast. Want to spend a quiet day canoeing? Build your trip around Kejimkujik National Park. Dying for some gourmet dining and urban buzz? Factor in a couple days in Halifax.

Above all, schedule time for simply doing not much of anything. Strolling or biking in quiet lanes; picnicking on a beach; and watching the tides from docks, boat decks, and hotel porches are the best ways I know to let Nova Scotia's charms sink in at their own unhurried pace.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Every traveler to Nova Scotia should get a copy of the massive (400-plus-page) official tourism guide. It's comprehensive, colorful, well-organized, and free, listing most hotels, campgrounds, and attractions within the province, plus brief descriptions and current prices. (Restaurants are given only limited coverage, however; investigate those using this book and your own nose for eats.)

The tome, called the *Nova Scotia Doers' & Dreamers' Guide,* becomes available each year around March. Contact the province by phone (✆ **800/565-0000** or 902/424-5000), mail (Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture, and Heritage, P.O. Box 456, Halifax, NS B3J 2R5), or Internet (www.novascotia.com). You can wait until you arrive in the province to obtain the visitor's guide, of course. But then you won't be able to do much advance planning.

The provincial government administers about a dozen official **Visitor Information Centres** (known as "VICs") throughout the province, as well as in Portland and Bar Harbor, Maine. These mostly seasonal centers (see box) are amply stocked with brochures and tended by knowledgeable staffers. In addition, virtually every town of any note has a local tourist information center filled with racks of brochures covering the entire province, staffed with local people who know the area. You won't ever be short of information. Also be sure to request the province's excellent free road map, which will begin to give you a sense of how few roads there actually are here. (What the map *doesn't* convey is how big the province is. Driving takes time here.)

In general, the local and provincial visitor information centers are run with cordiality and brisk efficiency. I have yet to come across a single one that wasn't remarkably helpful, although the press of crowds can sometimes require a few minutes' wait to get individual

Year-Round Tourist Info? Yes!

Coming to Nova Scotia off season? Fear not. Halifax's two VICs, one located at the airport and one situated downtown on the waterfront's Sackville Wharf on Lower Water Street, are both open all year round. There's also a year-round VIC located in the town of Amherst, at the westernmost entry point to the province (in other words, on the main road coming from New Brunswick). Cape Breton visitors will be cheered to know that the VIC guarding the island's entrance (it's just across the bridge from the mainland) in Port Hastings is open 8 months out of the year, closing only from New Year's through May 1st. If you're arriving via the CAT ferry to Yarmouth, note that the city's VIC is only open from June through mid-October—similar to the ferry's seasonal running schedule.

attention at the more popular gateways, such as Amherst (outside Halifax) or Port Hastings (entering Cape Breton Island).

For general questions about travel in the province, call **Nova Scotia's information hot line** at ✆ **800/565-0000** (North America) or 902/424-5000 (outside North America).

GETTING THERE **By Car & Ferry** Most travelers reach Nova Scotia overland by car from New Brunswick. Plan on at least a 4-hour drive from the U.S. border at Calais, Maine, to Amherst (at the New Brunswick–Nova Scotia border). Incorporating ferries into your itinerary can significantly reduce time behind the wheel. Seasonal ferries (usually running from June until the first or second week of October) connect both Portland and Bar Harbor, Maine, to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, at the peninsula's southwest end, though neither runs daily; at press time, each operated three to four times per week, depending on the season.

Bay Ferries (✆ **888/249-7245;** www.catferry.com) operates these international ferries. The Bar Harbor–Yarmouth and Portland–Yarmouth routes use *The Cat* (short for catamaran), a very fast ferry which scoots across the Gulf of Maine at speeds of up to 50 mph (the ride can get bumpy).

One-way summer fares from Portland in 2009 were C$99 for adults and children age 13 to 18 from Portland, C$65 for children 6 to 13, C$94 for seniors, and C$164 per passenger car (more for trucks and buses), plus a C$25 fuel surcharge and a C$10 security fee. From Bar Harbor, in 2009, it cost C$69 per adult and child age 13 to 18, C$47 per child age 6 to 13, C$64 per senior, and C$115 and up per vehicle—once again, plus taxes, fees, and fuel surcharges. Same-day-return and weekend-getaway round-trip fares are cheaper. I cannot stress enough that reservations for both routes are *vital* during the peak summer season.

To shorten the long drive around the Bay of Fundy, a 3-hour ferry (also operated by Bay Ferries) known as the *Princess of Acadia* links **Saint John, New Brunswick,** with **Digby, Nova Scotia.** Remarkably, this ferry sails daily year-round, with two sailings per day during peak travel periods. In 2009, the peak season one-way fare (charged June through October) was C$40 for adults, C$25 for children age 6 to 13, C$5 per child under age 6, and C$30 for students and seniors. Your car itself costs an additional C$80 (more for trucks, vans, and buses), plus a C$20 fuel surcharge. Fares are a bit cheaper outside the peak travel months, and if you walk on and return within 30 days, there are also discounts available on the round-trip. Note that AAA and CAA members receive

Newcastle
Tignish
Kouchibouguac National Park
Alberton
Cape Wolfe
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
S.W. Miramichi R.
Richibucto
NEW BRUNSWICK
Egmont Bay
Malpeque Bay
Summerside
Northumberland Strait
Shediac Bay
Chipman
Minto
Grand Lake
Moncton
Confederation Bridge
Baie Verte
Fredericton
Petitcodiac
Pugwash
Amherst
Oxford
Sussex
Joggins
Springhill
Fundy National Park
Chignecto Bay
St. John R.
Londonderry
Parrsboro
St. Martins
Saint John
Cobequid Bay
Truro
Minas Channel
Minas Basin
Bay of Fundy
Saint John Harbour
St. George
Kentville
Wolfville
Stewiacke
Middleton
Windsor
Bridgetown
Annapolis Royal
Grand Manan
New Ross
Panuke Lake
Dartmouth
Digby
Waterford
Chester
Halifax
Halifax Harbour
Long Island
Weymouth
Saint Marys Bay
Mahone Bay
Peggy's Cove
Kejimkujik Lake
Caledonia
Freeport
Kejimkujik National Park
Bridgewater
Lunenburg
Brier Island
Meteghan
Medway R.
Lake Rossignol
Liverpool
Sanford
Tusket
Port Mouton
Yarmouth
Shelburne
Wedgeport
To Bar Harbor & Portland, ME
Tusket Islands
Lockeport
Roseway
Clarks Harbour
Seal Island
Cape Sable Island
ACADIAN COAST
SOUTH SHORE

GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE
To Îles-de-la-Madeleine
Cape North
To Newfoundland
Aspy Bay
Pleasant Bay
Cape Breton Highlands National Park
Chéticamp
Ingonish
Ingonish Beach
Belle Côte
Margaree Harbour
Margaree Forks
Inverness
CAPE BRETON ISLAND
Sydney Mines
Glace Bay
Baddeck
Sydney
Mira Bay
Ainslie Lake
Iona
Louisbourg
Scatarie Island
Whycocomagh
Bras d'Or Lake
Gabarus Bay
Fortress of Louisbourg
Prince Edward Island National Park
Elmira
St. Peters
Stanhope
Souris
Charlottetown
Georgetown
Montague
Hillsborough Bay
Woods Island
High Bank
Pictou Island
Cape George
St. Georges Bay
Pictou
Antigonish
New Glasgow
Stellarton
Port Hawkesbury
St Peters
Fourchu
Bay of Rocks
Guysborough
Chedabucto Bay
Canso
NOVA SCOTIA
W. St. Marys River
Melrose
Upper Musquodoboit
Country Island
Sheet Harbour
Liscomb
Ship Harbour
Port Dufferin
Tangier
Musquodoboit Harbour
EASTERN SHORE
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Sable Island
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C$10 discounts on the automobile portion of the fare. Fares are a bit cheaper outside the peak travel months; also, if you walk on and return within 30 days, there are also discounts available on the round-trip. Complete up-to-the-minute schedules and fares for the *Princess of Acadia* can be found at www.nfl-bay.com or by calling ✆ **888/249-SAIL** [7245].

For those traveling farther afield, ferries also connect Prince Edward Island to Caribou, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland to North Sydney, Nova Scotia. See chapters 7 and 8 for more detailed information on those ferry crossings.

Also note that you can view the latest **updated highway conditions** around the province of Nova Scotia by logging onto the province's transportation website at **http://511.gov.ns.ca/map**. This map shows both road construction projects and unusual weather conditions affecting traffic flow.

By Plane Halifax is the air hub of the Atlantic Provinces. **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) provides daily direct service from New York and Boston using its commuter partner **Jazz** (www.flyjazz.ca), which also flies directly to Sydney, Charlottetown, Saint John, and St. John's, as well as several more remote destinations in eastern Canada. But other contenders are jumping into the fray, as well: **Continental** (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com) flies direct from Newark to Halifax several times daily in summer, for one. American Airlines' **American Eagle** (✆ **800/433-7300;** www.aa.com) commuter service flies small planes from New York's LaGuardia Airport back and forth to Halifax. If you're coming from anywhere other than New York, however, you will probably need to connect in Montréal or Toronto, which can turn into a half-day excursion or more.

By Train **VIA Rail** (✆ **888/842-7245;** www.viarail.ca) offers train service 6 days a week on the *Ocean* run between Halifax and Montréal; the entire trip takes between 18 and 21 hours depending on direction, with a basic summertime fare of about C$250 each way, not counting sleeping accommodations (which can add considerably to the cost). Discounts for those buying at least 1 week in advance are sometimes possible.

As I said, sleeping berths and private cabins are available at extra cost—the cheapest bed, in a double-bunked cabin, is about twice the cost of the no-bed fare—and VIA has created an even higher class of service (summer-only) known as the Sleeper Touring class aboard the *Ocean*. This class offers all-inclusive meals, sleeping accommodations, exclusive access to lounges and a panoramic car, and continuing presentations from an onboard educator about Maritime Province culture and history.

The *Ocean* runs daily (except Tuesdays) each direction year-round, with standard overnight sleeper-cabin service; the Easterly option is available from mid-June through mid-October. Check the VIA Rail website for updates on routes, schedules, and online booking.

2 THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Nova Scotia's terrific official travel guide (the aforementioned *Doers' & Dreamers' Guide*) contains a very helpful "Outdoors" section in the back that's full of detailed listings of camping outfitters, bike shops, whale-watching tour operators, and the like. More specific information on the province's adventure outfitters can also be obtained from the

Tips Passing Time With the National Pass

Here's a great tip if you're planning to be in the province awhile and visit both national parks (Cape Breton Highlands and Kejimkujik) and some historic sites (the Citadel, Louisbourg), or visit adjoining provinces such as Prince Edward Island: You can now buy an all-Canada **National Pass** ★★★ for C$68 per adult (C$84 including historic sites) or C$136 per family (C$165 including historic sites), plus tax. The pass gains you access to participating national parks and sites for one full year.

Buy the pass right at the entrance of the first national park or historic site you visit. For more info, see the "Planning Your Visit" section of the Parks Canada website at **www.pc.gc.ca**.

trade association for providers, the **Nova Scotia Adventure Tourism Association,** 1099 Marginal Rd., Suite 201, Halifax, NS B3H 4P7 (✆ **800/948-4267** or 902/423-4480).

BIKING The low hills of Nova Scotia and the gentle, mostly empty roads make for wonderful cycling. Cape Breton is the most challenging of the province's destinations; the south coast and Bay of Fundy regions yield wonderful ocean views while making fewer cardiovascular demands on the cyclist. A number of bike outfitters can aid in your trip planning. **Freewheeling Adventures** (✆ **800/672-0775** or 902/857-3600; www.freewheeling.ca) is highly recommended for its guided bike tours throughout Nova Scotia (as well as Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland). Want to go it alone? Walter Sienko's guide, *Nova Scotia & the Maritimes by Bike: 21 Tours Geared for Discovery* (1995) is very helpful in planning a local bike excursion—though you don't need to follow all his recommended routes (they mostly stick to busier main roads). Order it from an online bookseller.

Also, for a good Internet introduction to cycling in Nova Scotia and beyond point your Web browser to the website of **Atlantic Canada Cycling** (www.atl-canadacycling.com) and click on "Tour Planning" for brief introductions to the regions of Nova Scotia and their respective characteristics (including strength of local winds). The site also offers group bicycle tours and events, and sells books and maps.

BIRD-WATCHING More than 400 species of birds have been spotted in Nova Scotia, ranging from odd and exotic birds blown off course in storms to majestic **bald eagles,** of which perhaps 250 nesting pairs reside in Nova Scotia, mostly on Cape Breton Island. Many whale-watching tours also offer specialized seabird-spotting tours, including trips to **puffin colonies.**

CAMPING With backcountry options rather limited, Nova Scotia's forte is drive-in camping. The 20 or so provincial parks offer some 1,500 campsites among them, and campgrounds are uniformly clean, friendly, well managed, and reasonably priced. For a brochure and map listing all provincial campsites, contact the **Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources/Parks and Recreation Division** (✆ **902/662-3030**). The division's website is located at **www.parksnovascotia.ca** and is well organized. As usual, the province's *Doers' & Dreamers' Guide* contains the fullest campground listings available in print.

Surf's Up in . . . Nova Scotia?

This is not a misprint. Surfing is suddenly popping up as an outdoor option in Nova Scotia. Who knew? At least two surf schools have opened for business, capitalizing on the Atlantic surf breaks along the South Shore and at Lawrencetown Beach outside Halifax. Contact the **Dacane Surf Shop** (✆ **902/431-7873;** www.hurricanesurf.com) on Blowers St. in the heart of Halifax or the **Rossignol Surf Shop** (✆ **902/354-7100;** www.surfnovascotia.com) at White Point Beach Lodge in Port Joli (about halfway between Yarmouth and Halifax) for more information about how and where to hang ten in the province. Just remember to buy, beg, borrow, or rent a wetsuit if you go. That water's *cold.*

Also check with the Campground Owners Association of Nova Scotia: Its website at **www.campingnovascotia.com** lists a number of privately held campgrounds. The free and helpful *Campers Guide,* available at visitor information centers, lists this information as well.

CANOEING Nova Scotia offers an abundance of accessible canoeing on inland lakes and ponds. The premier destination is **Kejimkujik National Park** in the southern interior, which has plenty of backcountry sites accessible by canoe. A number of other fine canoe trips allow paddlers and portagers to venture off for hours or days. General information on paddling routes, classes, events, and local clubs is available from the organization **Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia,** 5516 Spring Garden Rd., 4th floor, Halifax, NS B3J 1G6 (✆ **902/425-5454,** ext. 316). The group's website can be found at **www.ckns.ca**.

FISHING Saltwater fishing tours are easily arranged on charter boats berthed at many of the province's harbors. Inquire locally at visitor information centers or consult the "Boat Tours & Charters" section of the *Doers' & Dreamers' Guide.* No fishing license is required for *most* saltwater species for those on charters. For questions, current fishing regulations, or lists of licensed fishing guides, check out the Nova Scotia **Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture** website at **www.gov.ns.ca/fish**.

Committed freshwater anglers come to Nova Scotia in pursuit of the tragically dwindling Atlantic salmon, which requires a license separate from that for other freshwater fish. **Salmon licenses** must be obtained from a provincial office, campground, or licensed outfitter. Other freshwater species popular with anglers are brown trout, shad, smallmouth bass, rainbow trout, and speckled trout. Again, for up-to-date information contact the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture (see above).

GOLF Nova Scotia lays claim to more than 50 golf courses. Among the most memorable are the government-owned **Highland Links** (✆ **800/441-1118** or 902/285-2600; www.highlandlinksgolf.com) course in Ingonish, which features a dramatic oceanside setting, and **Bell Bay Golf Club** (✆ **800/565-3077** or 902/295-1333; www.bellbaygolfclub.com) near Baddeck—which is also wonderfully scenic and has appeared in *Golf Digest.* Highland Links costs C$91 plus tax for 18 holes in peak season; Bell Bay, C$79 for 18 holes in peak season. Both cost less during spring and fall, and Sunday or twilight rates are sometimes also available.

While the big names are fun, I really enjoy playing some of the less famous courses around the province, too. The **Bluenose Golf Club** (✆ **902/634-4260**) has been operating

on a beautiful tract of land known as Kaulbach Head overlooking Lunenburg's harbor since 1933. (It's visible in the distance from almost any point in the old town.) The short, 5,275-yard tract here plays harder than it looks because of numerous slopes and side-hill lies. Views of the ocean and town are stupendous on both the starting and finishing holes; peak-season greens fees are just C$28 for 9 holes, C$45 for 18 holes (carts cost extra); and the clubhouse grill serves up mighty fine burgers and beers on tap. Rent at least a pull-cart to deal with the hills.

Two more nicely scenic tracts open to the public in Nova Scotia are the **Chester Golf Club** (✆ **902/275-4543;** www.chestergolfclub.ca), with amazing ocean views and fine course maintenance (C$35 for 9 holes, C$59 for 18 holes); and hilly, beautiful **Osprey Ridge** (✆ **902/543-6666;** www.ospreyridge.ns.ca) near Shelburne, designed by the noted course architect Graham Cooke and opened in 1999, which costs C$35 weekdays and C$30 to C$55 on weekends.

New courses are always being constructed, too. For one-stop shoppers, **Golf Nova Scotia** (✆ **800/565-0000,** ext. 007; www.golfnovascotia.com), run by the tourism office, represents about 30 well-regarded properties around the province and can arrange customized golfing packages at its member courses. A handy directory of Nova Scotia's golf courses (with phone numbers) is published as a separate brochure and in the "Outdoors" section of the *Doers' & Dreamers' Guide* as well.

HIKING & WALKING Serious hikers make tracks for **Cape Breton Highlands National Park,** which is home to the most dramatic terrain in the province. But other options abound—trails are found throughout Nova Scotia, although in many cases they're a matter of local knowledge. (Ask at the visitor information centers.) Published hiking guides are widely available at local bookstores. Especially helpful are the back-pocket-size guides published by **Nimbus Publishing;** call for a catalog (✆ **800/646-2879** or 902/454-7404; www.nimbus.ns.ca).

SAILING Any area with so much convoluted coastline is clearly inviting to sailors and gunkholers. Tours and charters are available almost everywhere there's a decent-size harbor. The province's premier sailing experience is an excursion aboard the *Bluenose II,* which is virtually an icon for Atlantic Canada and calls at Halifax, Lunenburg, and other ports. (See the "Lunenburg" section, later in this chapter.) A much more extensive listing of boat tour operators can be found in the "Outdoor Tours: Boat Tours & Charters" section of the *Doers' & Dreamers' Guide.*

SEA K AYAKING Nova Scotia is increasingly attracting the attention of kayakers worldwide. Kayakers traveling on their own should be especially cautious on the Bay of Fundy side, since the massive tides create strong currents that overmatch even the fittest of paddlers. More than three dozen kayak outfitters do business in Nova Scotia, and they offer everything from 1-hour introductory paddles to intensive weeklong trips; once again, consult the directory in the *Doers' & Dreamers' Guide.*

Among the most respected outfitters is **Coastal Adventures,** P.O. Box 77, Tangier, NS B0J 3H0 (✆ **877/404-2774** or 902/772-2774; www.coastaladventures.com). The company is run by veteran kayaker and doctorate-in-biology Scott Cunningham, who leads trips throughout the Maritimes and Newfoundland. For kayaking on the eastern side of Cape Breton, check with **North River Kayak,** R.R. #4, Baddeck, NS B0E 1B0 (✆ **888/865-2925** or 902/929-2628; www.northriverkayak.com). Owner Angelo Spinazzola is a native Cape Bretoner and a professional musician with several CDs to his credit; he's been running this award-winning outfit for more than a decade.

WHALE-WATCHING When on the Nova Scotia coast, you're never far from a whale-watching operation. Around two dozen such tour outfits offer trips in search of finback, humpback, pilot, and minke whales, among others. The richest waters for whale-watching are on the Fundy Coast, where the endangered right whale is often seen feeding in summer; thus, Digby Neck (the thin strand of land extending southwest from the town of Digby) has the highest concentration of whale-watching excursions in the province, but you'll find them in many other coves and harbors, as well. Ask staff at local visitor information centers to direct you to the whales, or check the provincial tourism guide, which contains a very good listing of whale-watchers.

3 MINAS BASIN & COBEQUID BAY

If you're only truly content when getting off the beaten track, a detour along the Minas Basin and Cobequid Bay might be one of the highlights of your trip to Nova Scotia. With the exception of Truro, this region is rural, quiet, and full of hidden surprises. You can turn down a dirt road, shut off your car's engine, and not hear much other than the wind and some birds. You can trek along spectacular hiking trails or picnic alone on a long stretch of remote and misty coast, literally watching the tides roll in—and you'll almost certainly be alone. Tourists haven't wised up to this region yet.

There's a rich history here, though it tends to be hidden and subtle rather than preening and obvious. Don't look for the quaint seaside villages or the surf-washed rocky coast for which Nova Scotia is famous, either; that will have to wait until you get to Yarmouth and the South Shore. The natural drama here is pegged to the region's profound remoteness and the powerful but silent tides, among the highest in the world.

WOLFVILLE ★

The trim Victorian village of Wolfville (pop. 3,800) has a distinctively New England feel to it, both in its handsome architecture and its compact layout—a small commercial downtown just 6 blocks long is surrounded by shady neighborhoods of elegant homes.

Moments A Scenic Drive

If you're headed from the Truro area southwestward along the Fundy Coast toward Digby, **Route 215** offers a wonderful **coastal detour** ★ from Maitland to Windsor. This winding, fast, and rather narrow road (which is not recommended for bicyclists) passes through a number of quiet hamlets, some with handsome early buildings. But the chief appeal comes in the sudden vistas of lush green farmland (often accompanied by the redolent smells of cow byproduct) and broad views of Minas Basin beyond. At the town of Walton, there's a handsome lighthouse on a rocky bluff with a nearby picnic area just off the main route (it's well marked). This detour runs about 90km (56 miles) from South Maitland to Brooklyn. Few services for tourists are offered along this route, other than a handful of restaurants, B&Bs, and campgrounds. Look for general stores and farm stands if you need a snack.

And it's not hard to trace that sensibility back to its source: The area was largely populated in the wake of the American Revolution by transplanted New Englanders, who forced off the original Acadian settlers.

The town's mainstay these days is handsome **Acadia University,** which has nearly as many full-time students as there are residents of Wolfville. The university's presence gives the small village an edgier, more youthful air. Don't miss the university's **Art Gallery** ★ (✆ **902/585-1373**; http://gallery.acadiau.ca), which showcases both contemporary and historic Nova Scotian art; it's located at 10 Highland Ave. (at the corner of Main St.) and is open Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 4pm, year-round. Admission is free.

Exploring Wolfville

Strolling through the village is a good way to spend a half-day; the towering elms and maples that shade the extravagant Victorian architecture make for an ideal walk. Begin at the **Wolfville Tourist Bureau** (✆ **877/999-7117** or 902/542-7000) at 11 Willow Ave. (in Willow Park) on the northern edge of the downtown area; it's open daily from mid-April through October. Also be sure to check out the local tourism website at **www.wolfville.info**. For a good printable map of Wolfville's downtown area, go to **www.downtownwolfville.com** and click on "Maps & Guides."

Cape Split, the hook of land that extends far into the Bay of Fundy north of Wolfville, is home to several **walking trails** ★ through rugged landscapes and intriguing geological formations.

At **Blomidon Provincial Park** (✆ **902/584-2332**), 24km (15 miles) north of Route 101 (exit 11), some 14km (8.7 miles) of trail take walkers through forest and along the coast. Among the most dramatic trails is the 6km (3.7-mile) **Jodrey Trail** ★, which follows towering cliffs that offer broad views over the Minas Basin. It's open from mid-May through early October.

For a more demanding adventure, head north of Wolfville about 25 minutes on Route 358 and park off the side of the road near the beginning of the **Cape Split Trail** ★. This 16km (10-mile) trail offers some of the more breathtaking vistas in Nova Scotia, specifically cresting oceanside cliffs that approach 122m (400 ft.) in height. Allow most of a day to truly enjoy this in-and-back excursion.

Grand-Pré Na tional Historic Site ★ Long before relocated New Englanders arrived in this part of Canada, hardworking Acadians had already vastly altered the local landscape. They did it in large part by constructing a series of dikes outfitted with ingenious log valves, which allowed farmers to convert the saltwater marshes to productive farmland. At Grand-Pré, a short drive east of Wolfville just off Route 1, you can learn about these dikes, along with the history of the Acadians who populated the Minas Basin from 1680 until their expulsion in 1755. More a memorial park than a history exhibit, Grand-Pré ("great meadow") features superbly tended grounds excellent for picnics or contemplative strolls. Among the handful of buildings on the grounds is a graceful stone church, built in 1922 on the presumed site of the original Acadian church. Evangeline Bellefontaine, the revered (albeit fictional) heroine of Longfellow's epic poem, was said to have been born here; look for the tragic heroine's iconic statue in the garden, created in 1920 by Canadian sculptor Philippe Hérbert.

2241 Grand-Pré Rd. (P.O. Box 150), Grand-Pré B0P 1M0. ✆ **902/542-4040.** www.grand-pre.com. Admission C$7.80 adults , C$6.55 seniors , C$3.90 childr en age 6–16, C$20 families . Daily mid-M ay to mid-Oct 9am–6pm. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May.

Moments Swift Retribution

One of the more intriguing sights in Wolfville occurs on summer nights at dusk, in a simple park just off Main Street known as **Robie Swift Park.** Here a single abandoned chimney (from a long-gone dairy plant) rises straight up like a stumpy finger pointed at the skies. Around sunset, groups of chimney swifts—sometimes large groups—flit around, then descend into the chimney for a night's sleep. The swifts have been declining in number, ever since predatory merlins began nesting nearby. But you'll still learn a lot about them by browsing the informational plaques posted here. My favorite tidbit about the birds: No one even knew where swifts migrated to in winter until 1943, when explorers in the Peruvian jungle found natives wearing necklaces adorned with small aluminum rings. Yep, you guessed it: They were tracking bands placed on North American swifts by ornithologists. Mystery solved.

Where to Stay

Gingerbread House Inn ★ The ornate, brightly painted Gingerbread House Inn was originally the carriage house for the building now housing Victoria's Historic Inn (see below). A former owner went woodshop-wild, adding all manner of swirly accoutrements and giving the place a convincingly authentic air. Most guest rooms here are now an updated and modern interpretation of the gingerbread style and are quite comfortable, though the two units in the back are darker and smaller than the rest. Each room has its own private exterior entrance, adding to the privacy, and each has its own feel: The airy Gaspereau suite has a modern-city loft feel, with luxe touches such as a sleek propane fireplace, big-screen television, and big eight-person hot tub beneath a mural of a lake. But the Country and Sunrise suites are much more, well, gingerbread with their exposed unvarnished wood, throw rugs, rocking chairs and the like. Even some of the simpler rooms sport hot tubs. Breakfasts here are elaborate.

8 Robie Tufts Dr. (P.O. Box 819), Wolfville, NS B4P 1X1. ✆ **888/542-1458** or 902/542-1458. Fax 902/542-4718. www.gingerbreadhouse.ca. 9 units. May–Oct C$115–C$129 double, C$165–C$199 suite; Nov–Apr C$85–C$119 double, C$135–C$199 suite. Rates include full breakfast. Ask about golf packages. AE, MC, V. No children permitted in suites. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD, fireplace, Jacuzzi (some), no phone.

Harwood House Bed & Breakfast ★ Harwood House is downtown, beside Acadia University—in fact, when it was built in 1923 on a sloping lawn adjacent to the campus, it was built for then university provost Frank "Pa" Wheelock. Later home to a popular local family doctor, it was converted to an inn in 1999. The Juckers are warm and helpful, extending kindnesses far beyond those normally required of inn hosts; they even speak French and German. Three queen-bedded rooms here are simple but airy, with white and floral linens and prints—the Glooscap unit is perhaps the best of the lot, overlooking the campus (though its private bathroom sits across the hall).

34 Highland Ave., Wolfville, NS B4P 1Y9. ✆ **877/897-0156** or 902/542-5707. www.harwoodhouse.com. 3 units, 1 with separate bathroom. C$100–C$160 double; off-season discounts available. Packages available. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. *In room:* TV (2 units), no phone.

Tattingstone Inn ★★ This handsome Italianate-Georgian mansion, named after one of Harwood's forebears' ancestral town in England, dates from 1874 and overlooks

the village's main drag. It has changed hands but not its feeling. The inn is still furnished with a mix of reproductions and antiques, of traditional and modern art. The place isn't as over-the-top Victorian as one might guess when first laying eyes on the manse; instead, the inn is decorated with a deft touch that mixes informal country antiques with regal Empire pieces. Rooms in the carriage house are a little smaller than those in the main house, but still pleasant—and they showcase fine examples of modern Canadian art. Ask about the blue-and-cream "Toad Hall" room in the carriage house if you value privacy: There's a living room downstairs with an electric fireplace and an exposed-beam ceiling, while the upstairs sports a queen bed and two-person Jacuzzi. The Tattingstone's spacious, semi-formal dining room is refined; diners eat off white tablecloths beneath stern Doric columns. The heated outdoor pool is a bonus, as is the enclosed sun porch, which nicely captures the lambent early evening light.

620 Main St. (P.O. Box 98), Wolfville, NS B4P 1E8. ✆ **800/565-7696** or 902/542-7696. www.tattingstone.ns.ca. 10 units. July–Oct C$118–C$178 double; Nov–June C$98–C$165 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; outdoor pool; steam room; tennis court. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some), fireplace (some), no phone.

Victoria's Historic Inn ★★ Victoria's Historic Inn was constructed by apple mogul William Chase in 1893, and remains architecturally elaborate today. The sturdy Queen Anne–style building features bold pediments and pavilions adorned with balusters and ornate Stick-style trim. Inside, it feels like you've wandered into a Victorian parlor. Whereas the nearby Tattingstone Inn (see above) resists theme decor, Victoria's Historic Inn embraces it wholeheartedly: there's a Cranberry Room, a Sunflower Room, a Nautical Room, and so on. There's also dense mahogany and cherry woodwork throughout, along with some exceptionally intricate ceilings. Several of the inn's suites have fireplaces and Jacuzzis. The deluxe two-room Chase Suite (the most expensive unit), for instance, features a large sitting room with a gas fireplace, double Jacuzzi, queen bed, and an oak mantle. Less expensive third-floor rooms are smaller and somewhat less historic in flavor.

600 Main St., Wolfville, NS B4P 1E8. ✆ **800/556-5744** or 902/542-5744. Fax 902/542-7794. www.victoriashistoricinn.com. 15 units. Apr–Oct C$118–C$245 double and suite; Nov–Mar C$108–C$175 double and suite. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, Jacuzzi (some).

Where to Dine

If you're looking for something more elegant than these casual spots, many of the inns around Wolfville open their dining rooms at night and serve fancy food to the public, though prices will match.

Al's Homestyle Café (Value) DELI This lowbrow, family-operated diner/deli is located in the nearby hamlet of Canning, about 10 miles northwest of Wolfville along Route 358. It has been a local favorite for years. Al Waddell no longer owns the place, but his popular recipes for sausages live on—choose from flavors like Polish, German, hot Italian, and honey garlic. They also pack the sausages to go. A sausage on a bun plus a cup of soup will run you less than C$5.

9819 Main St., Canning. ✆ **902/582-7270.** Most selections less than C$5. V. Mon–Sat 8am–6pm; Sun 11am–5pm.

The Coffee Merchant and Library Pub (Finds) COFFEE SHOP ★ Get your java and coffeehouse-culture fix at what's likely the hippest place in a pretty straight (not to say square) town. Besides an array of coffee drinks, the shop also has a selection of pastries and sweets, as well as a selection of coffees and an impressive array of organic teas. After

9pm, the place transforms into a wine bar/pub upstairs, and musicians sometimes show up to gig. Great place to meet a few locals.

472 Main St. ✆ **902/542-4315.** Daily 7am–midnight.

4 ANNAPOLIS ROYAL ★★

Annapolis Royal is arguably Nova Scotia's most historic town—it bills itself, with some justification, as "Canada's birthplace"—and it remains a treat to visit. Because the region was largely overlooked by later economic growth (the bulk of the trade and fishing moved to the Atlantic side of the peninsula), it requires very little in the way of imagination to see Annapolis Royal as it once was. (The current year-round population is less than 500.) The original settlement was rebuilt on the presumed site of explorer Samuel de Champlain's famous 1604 visit; the old Fort Anne still overlooks the upper reaches of the basin, much as it did when abandoned in 1854; and the village maintains much of its original historic charm, with narrow streets and historic buildings fronting a now-placid waterfront.

Annapolis Royal is also considered by many historians to be the birthplace of the continent's historic preservation movement. Town residents have been unusually activist about preserving the character of their town, and as a testament to their dedication some 150 buildings and homes in town are now officially designated heritage sites (and presumably can't be altered much by future owners). For anyone curious about Canada's early history, Annapolis Royal is one of Nova Scotia's absolute don't-miss destinations.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Annapolis is located at exit 22 off Route 101. It is 200km (124 miles) from Halifax, and 129km (80 miles) from Yarmouth.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Annapolis Royal and Area Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **902/532-5454**) is 1km (⅔ mile) north of the town center at 236 Prince Albert Rd. (follow Prince Albert Rd. and look for the Annapolis Royal Tidal Generating Station). It's usually open daily in summer 8am to 8pm, and 10am to 6pm in spring and fall. Also check the town's official tourism site at **www.annapolisroyal.com** for more local details.

EXPLORING THE TOWN

Start at the tourist bureau, which is located at the **Annapolis Royal Tidal Power Generation Station** (✆ **902/532-5454**), where the extreme fall in the tides has been harnessed since 1984 to produce electricity for the area in a generating station. It's the *only* such tidal generator in North America, and the world's largest straight-flow turbine—trust me, this sort of arcana will suddenly become important when the price of oil skyrockets. If you're so inclined, you can learn about the generator at the free exhibit center upstairs from the visitor information center, open roughly from mid-May until mid-October.

Even if you don't have time to visit the power station, do pick up a copy of the free walking-tour brochure at the tourism office. An annotated map provides architectural and historic context for a stroll downtown and around the waterfront. It's pretty amazing to stop and think, as you stroll down lower St. George Street, that you're walking down the oldest street in Canada.

Children and adults alike adore the **Upper Clements Parks** ★ (✆ **888/248-4567** or 902/532-7557; www.upperclementsparks.com) on Route 1, about 5 minutes south of Annapolis Royal. It's an old-fashioned amusement park (you arrive after driving through an old orchard), full of low-key attractions that will delight younger kids. Highlights include the flume ride (originally built for Expo '86 in Vancouver), a wooden roller coaster that twists and winds through trees left standing during the coaster's construction, and a mini train. It's open daily in season from 11am to 7pm; admission to the grounds is C$8.50 plus tax, free for children under 2. The rate includes admission to the adjacent wild animal park. Single rides cost C$3, while bracelets permitting unlimited access to rides run from about C$20 to C$30 per day. AAA and CAA members receive a hefty 25% discount.

In the evening, there's often entertainment in downtown Annapolis Royal at **King's Theatre,** 209 St. George St. (✆ **902/532-5466;** www.kingstheatre.ca). Shows range from movies to musical performances to variety shows to touring plays—and there are plenty of offerings for kids, too. Stop by or call to find out what's happening during your stay.

Fort Anne National Historic Site ★ What you'll likely remember about a visit here are the impressive grassy earthworks that cover some 14 hectares (35 acres) of high ground overlooking the confluence of the Annapolis River and Allains Creek. The French built the first fort here around 1643. Since then, dozens of buildings and fortifications have occupied this site. You can visit the 1708 gunpowder magazine (the oldest building among all the Canadian National Historic Sites), then look through a museum located in the 1797 British field officers' quarters. The model of this site as it appeared in 1710 is especially intriguing. If you find all the history a bit tedious, ask a guide for a croquet set and practice your technique on the green lawns. A good strategy for visiting is to come during the day to tour the museum and get a feel for the lay of the land. Then return later for the evening sunset, long after the bus tours have departed, to walk the **Perimeter Trail** ★, an easy 530m (⅓-mile-long) path that traces along the top of the star-shaped fort and features good river and valley vistas.

Entrance on St. George St. ✆ **902/532-2397.** Admission C$3.90 adults, C$3.40 seniors, C$1.90 children, C$9.80 families. May 15–Oct 15 9am–6pm; off season by appointment only (grounds open year-round).

Historic Gardens ★ You don't need to be a flower nut to enjoy an hour or two at these exceptional gardens, open to the public since 1981. The 4-hectare (10-acre) grounds are uncommonly beautiful, with a mix of formal and informal gardens dating from varied epochs. Set on a gentle hill, the plantings overlook a beautiful salt marsh (now diked and farmed), and they include a geometric Victorian garden, a knot garden, a rock garden, and a colorful perennial border garden. Rose fanciers should allow plenty of time—some 2,000 rose bushes (of 230 cultivars) track the history of the flower's cultivation from earliest days through the Victorian era to the present day. A garden cafe offers an enticing spot for lunch.

441 St. George St. ✆ **902/532-7018.** www.historicgardens.com. Admission C$7.50 adults, C$6.50 seniors and students, C$20 families. July–Aug daily 8am–dusk; May–June and Sept–Oct daily 9am–5pm. Closed Nov–Apr.

North Hills Museum On the road to Port Royal, the North Hills Museum occupies a tidy shingled home, built in 1764, that's filled with a top-rate collection of Georgian furniture, ceramics, and glassware. It's mostly thanks to local banker Robert Patterson,

who accumulated the collection, then donated it to the province in the 1970s. The compact museum is of interest primarily to serious antiques collectors and history buffs; casual visitors might be just a bit frustrated by such opulently furnished rooms at arm's length, glimpsed at from roped-off doorways.

5065 Granville Rd., Granville Ferry. ✆ **902/532-2168.** Admission C$3 adults, C$2 seniors and children age 6–17, C$7 families. June to mid-Oct Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm, Sun 1–5:30pm. Closed mid-Oct to May.

Port-Royal National Historic Site ★ Canada's first permanent settlement, Port Royal was located on an attractive point with sweeping views of the Annapolis Basin. After spending the dreadful winter of 1604 on an island in the St. Croix River (along the current Maine–New Brunswick border), the survivors moved to this better-protected location. Settlers lived here for 8 years in a high style that approached decadency given such bleak surroundings. Many of the handsome, compact, French-style farmhouse buildings originally here were designed by Samuel de Champlain to re-create the comfort they might have enjoyed at home.

Although the original settlement was abandoned and eventually destroyed, this 1939 reproduction is convincing in all the details. You'll find a handful of costumed interpreters engaged in traditional handicrafts like woodworking. Have the interpreters show some of the tools and techniques ("Rat-tailing"? "Mortise and tenon"? Check) used in these construction techniques. They're also happy to fill you in on life in the colony during those difficult early years when the French first forged an uneasy alliance with local natives. Allow 1 or 2 hours to wander and explore.

10km (6¼ miles) south of Rte. 1, Granville Ferry (turn left shortly after passing the tidal generating station). ✆ **902/532-2898.** Admission C$3.90 adults, C$3.40 seniors, C$1.90 children, C$9.80 families. May 15–Oct 15 daily 9am–6pm. Closed Oct 16–May 14.

OUTDOOR PURSUITS

A short drive from Annapolis Royal and Port Royal are the **Delaps Cove Wilderness Trails,** which provide access to the rugged Fundy coastline. The tricky part is finding the trail head, as signs tend to vanish. Directions and a brochure are usually available from the visitor information center. Otherwise, head to Delaps Cove from Granville Ferry; veer left on the dirt road that cuts steeply downhill at a rightward bend shortly before the cove. (If you get to Tidal Cove Campground and Cabins, you've gone too far.) Follow this dirt road to the end, where you'll find parking and trail maps.

Two trails lead from an overgrown farm road to the rocky coastline. My advice is to take the **Bohaker Trail ★** (2km/1.25 miles) first, then decide whether you want to continue on to **Charlies Trail ★** (7km/4.35 miles). The Bohaker is a lovely loop through woodlands to a short coastline trail. The highlight is a cobblestone cove piled with driftwood, into which a small waterfall tumbles. This is a good place for a picnic. The trails are well marked—once you find them, that is.

WHERE TO STAY

The closest campground to Annapolis Royal is on a handsome 9-hectare (22-acre) waterfront property, just across the embayment from the famed tidal generating station. This facility, the privately owned **Dunromin Campsite ★** (✆ **902/532-2808;** www.dunromincampsite.com), has full hookups for trailers and RVs and attractive tenting sites along the water's edge, plus high-speed Internet access, an on-site cafe, and a few

cabins. Tent and RV sites cost C$27 to C$40, while the cabins are available for C$65 to C$110 per night. The campsite is open from May through mid-October.

For more modern, motel-like accommodations near town, try the **Annapolis Royal Inn** (✆ **888/857-8889** or 902/532-2323), south of town on Highway 101, exit 22. Doubles are C$120 to C$148 in high season, lower in off seasons.

Garrison House Inn ★ The historic Garrison House sits across the road from Fort Anne in the town center; it has been taking in guests since 1854, when it first opened to accommodate officers at the fort. Rooms are nicely appointed with antiques. There's no air-conditioning, but fans are provided. (The top floor can be a bit stuffy on warm days.) Room no. 2 is attractive with its wide pine floors, braided rug, and wing-back chairs, although it faces the street; room no. 7 is tucked in back, well away from the hubbub, and has two skylights and a big demilune window to let in light. The inn's very good restaurant (see below) includes a screened-in veranda with food and drink service.

350 St. George St., Annapolis Royal, NS B0S 1A0. ✆ **866/532-5750** or 902/532-5750. Fax 902/532-5501. www.garrisonhouse.ca. 7 units. C$69–C$149 double. AE, MC, V. Street parking. Open May–Nov; call in advance for weekends rest of year. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* AC, TV/DVD, Jacuzzi (1 unit), no phone.

Hillsdale House Inn ★ New owners have put a fresh shine on the clapboard Italianate home (built in 1849) that sits right across the road from the Queen Anne Inn (see below). The Hillsdale's first floor features a Georgian-style sitting room with furniture that's nice to look at and comfortable to sit on. The guest rooms are handsome, furnished with antique writing desks, new linens, claw-foot tubs, and poster beds. Only top-floor rooms have air-conditioning, although all units now possess flatscreen televisions, CD-playing clock radios, and (at last) telephones. A full included hot breakfast is another recent addition. This is a place on the rise.

519 St. George St. (P.O. Box 148), Annapolis Royal, NS B0S 1A0. ✆ **877/839-2821** or 902/532-2345. www.hillsdalehouse.ns.ca. 15 units. May to mid-Oct C$109–C$149 double; rest of the year C$79–C$129 double. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. *In room:* A/C (some units), TV.

King George Inn ★ Kids This place is the opposite of a modern, sleek hotel. The handsome King George was built as a sea captain's mansion in 1868, and also served a stint as a rectory before becoming an inn. It's still fittingly busy and cluttered for its era; guest rooms are furnished entirely in antiques, mostly country Victorian pieces. Think commodes, bowls, pitchers, rocking chairs, Oriental rugs, and Tara-worthy lamps. Most of the rooms have queen-size beds—ask if you want a king or two doubles—and the two family suites have separate bedrooms with a shared bathroom. The best room in the house might be no. 7, the Duchess of Kent suite, with its Jacuzzi and small private deck off the back of the house overlooking the garden. A second Jacuzzi room was added later, in the Queen Victoria suite, which also has a king bed, bay window, and gigantic headboard (if you're into that). The inn features a pump organ and a 19th-century grand piano, and helpfully provides bikes for guests.

548 Upper St. George St., Annapolis Royal, NS B0S 1A0. ✆ **888/799-5464.** www.kinggeorgeinn.20m.com. 8 units. C$75–C$150 double. MC, V. Closed Jan–Apr. **Amenities:** Bikes. *In room:* A/C, hair dryer, no phone.

Queen Anne Inn ★★ You can't miss this Second Empire mansion, built in 1865, on your way into town. Like the Hillsdale House across the street, the Queen Anne (built for the sister of the Hillsdale's owner) has benefited from a preservation-minded owner,

who restored the Victorian detailing to its former luster. There's a zebra-striped dining-room floor (alternating planks of oak and maple) and a grand central staircase. The guest rooms are quite elegant and furnished appropriately for the Victorian era, although some have been updated to include Jacuzzis. Featherbeds and handmade soaps are other nice touches, and a dining room is open to the public for dinner 5 nights a week. There's also a two-story carriage house here split into two bi-level suite units, good for families. As if that weren't enough, the parklike grounds with their towering elms are shady and inviting. And breakfast is a three-course affair.

494 St. George St., Annapolis Royal, NS B0S 1A0. ✆ **877/536-0403** or 902/532-7850. Fax 902/532-2078. www.queenanneinn.ns.ca. 12 units. June–Oct C$109–C$209 double and suite; May C$99–C$139 double and suite. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* TV, Jacuzzi (some), no phone.

WHERE TO DINE

The Garrison House ★★ ECLETIC The Garrison House Inn's restaurant is arguably the most intimate, attractive, and innovative of Annapolis Royal's eating choices. Three cozy dining rooms in the inn each have a different feel: some with colonial colors, some with contemporary styling, most with black Windsor chairs and piscine art. (Check out the room with the green floors and the humpback whale.) Chef-owner Patrick Redgrave's menu ranges all over the world without ever losing its Canadian footing. Start with Thai shrimp soup, a seafood chowder, mushroom risotto, or mussels steamed in wine and finished with habanero cream. Main dishes might include Digby scallops, a Vietnamese coconut milk curry, grilled chicken, strip loin of beef, salmon poached in bourbon and glazed with maple, "mumbo-jumbo" jambalaya—or just the catch of the day.

350 St. George St. (inside the Garrison House Inn). ✆ **866/532-5750** or 902/532-5750. Reservations recommended in summer. Main courses C$14–C$27. AE, MC, V. May–Oct daily 5:30–8:30pm; Nov–Apr open by arrangement.

Ye Olde Town Pub PUB FARE For a more relaxed bite than other places around town, head by this genial local pub located centrally in town and housed in an 1884 brick building that was once a bank (hence the bars on the windows). It's said to be the smallest pub in Nova Scotia—in the entire history of the province. But they've got a big heart. There's beer, of course, but also a kitchen that serves vittles all day, a kids' menu, and even Wi-Fi internet access for those who just can't hoist a pint without updating their Twitter accounts about it at the same time.

9 Church St. ✆ **902/532-2244.** Daily 11am–11pm.

5 KEJIMKUJIK NATIONAL PARK ★★

About 45km (28 miles) southeast of Annapolis Royal is a popular national park that's a world apart from coastal Nova Scotia. Kejimkujik National Park, founded in 1968, is located in the heart of south-central Nova Scotia, and it is to lakes and bogs what the South Coast is to fishing villages and fog. Bear and moose are the full-time residents here; park visitors are the transients. The park, which was largely scooped and shaped during the last glacial epoch, is about 20% water, which makes it especially popular with canoeists. A few trails also weave through the park, but hiking is limited; the longest hike in

the park can be done in 2 hours. Bird-watchers are also drawn to the park in search of the 205 species that have been seen both here and at the Kejimkujik Seaside Adjunct, a 22-sq.-km (8½-sq.-mile) coastal holding west of Liverpool. Among the more commonly seen species are pileated woodpeckers and loons, and at night you can listen for the raspy call of the barred owl.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Kejimkujik National Park is approximately midway on Kejimkujik Scenic Drive (Rte. 8), which extends 115km (71 miles) between Annapolis Royal and Liverpool. The village of Maitland Bridge (pop. 130) is near the park's entrance. Plan on about a 2-hour drive from Halifax.

VISITOR INFORMATION The park's **visitor center** (✆ **902/682-2772**) is open daily and features slide programs and exhibits about the park's natural history. It sometimes closes on late-fall weekends.

FEES The park opens daily at 8:30am year-round, closing at 8pm in peak season (mid-June through Labour Day) and at 4:30pm the rest of the year. Entrance fees are C$5.80 for adults, C$4.90 for seniors, C$2.90 for children ages 6 to 16, and C$15 for families. Seasonal passes can cut the cost of a longer stay; they cost C$29 for adults, C$25 for seniors, C$15 for children ages 6 to 16, and C$74 for families. The campground kiosk stays open an hour later in peak season, until 9pm, to receive campers.

EXPLORING THE PARK

The park's nearly 150 square miles of forest, lakes, and bogs are peaceful and quiet. Part of what makes the park so appealing is its lack of access by car: one short park road off of Route 8 gets you partway into the park—but from there, you're forced to continue either on foot or by canoe.

A stop at the **visitor center** is worthwhile both for its exhibits on the region's natural history and a stroll on one of three short trails, including the Beech Grove loop (2km/1.2 miles), which takes you around a glacial hill called a drumlin. The park has an audio-taped walking tour available for borrowing, too; ask for it at the information center.

Canoeing is your best means of traversing the park, if you're into that. Bring your own craft or rent one at **Jakes Landing,** 3km (2 miles) along the park access road. (You can also rent paddleboats, kayaks, rowboats, and cycles at the facility.) Route maps are provided at the visitor center, and rangers also lead short guided canoe trips for novices. Multi-day trips from backcountry campsite to campsite are a good way to get to know the park intimately, or cobble together an excursion from one lake to another (which might involve portaging your canoe over dry land between bodies of water; bring a friend).

The park also has 15 **walking trails,** ranging from short and easy strolls to, well, longer easy strolls. In other words, there's no elevation gain here to speak of. The 6km (3½-mile) **Hemlocks and Hardwoods Trail** loops through stately groves of 300-year-old hemlocks; the 3km (2-mile) **Merrymakedge Beach Trail** skirts a lakeshore to end at a beach. A free map that describes the trails is available at the visitor center.

Mountain bikers can explore the old **Fire Tower Road,** a round-trip of about 19km (12 miles); the road becomes increasingly rugged until it ends at a fire tower near an old-growth forest of birch and maple. There are four other trails in the park where bikes are allowed, as well, including the 16km (10-mile) **New Grafton distance loop.** The other three trails are somewhat shorter, and are shared with hikers.

CAMPING

Backcountry camping ★★★ is this park's chief draw for locals. The more than 40 backcountry sites here are in such demand that they actually cost as much as the drive-in campsites. Overnighting on a distant lakeshore is the best way to get to know the park, so even if you're planning to car-camp, it's worth the extra time and expense of renting a canoe and paddling off for a night to one of these campsites just for the experience.

The canoe-in and hike-in sites are assigned individually, which means you needn't worry about noisy neighbors playing loud music on their car stereo. Backcountry rangers keep the sites in top shape, and each is stocked with firewood for the night (the wood is included in the campsite fee). Most sites can handle a maximum of six campers. Naturally, the best sites are snapped up on weekends by urbanites from Halifax; midweek, you've got a much better shot. You can also reserve backcountry sites (C$25 per site) up to 60 days in advance; call the **visitor center** (✆ **902/682-2772**) to do so, though your deposit it nonrefundable even if you have to cancel.

The park's drive-in campground at **Jeremy's Bay** ★ offers about 360 sites, a few quite close to the water's edge, and this campground is amazingly open year-round. Campground rates are C$18 to C$26 per night. Note that during the off season, November to April, there are no toilets or showers—just pits. Starting early each April reservations at the drive-in campground may be made for an additional fee by calling ✆ **877/RESERVE** [737-3783] or online at **www.pccamping.ca**.

6 DIGBY TO YARMOUTH ★

The South Shore—that stretch of coast between Yarmouth and Halifax—serves to confirm popular conceptions of Nova Scotia about small fishing villages and shingled homes. But the 113km (70-mile) shoreline from Digby to Yarmouth seems determined to confound those same conceptions. Here, rather than picture-postcard views, you'll find Acadian enclaves, fishing villages with more corrugated steel than weathered shingle, miles of sandy beaches with perhaps but a single walker and yapping dog each, and spruce-topped basalt cliffs that seem like they could be transplanted from Labrador.

The unassuming port town of **Digby** is located on the water at Digby Gap—where the Annapolis River forces an egress through the North Mountain coastal range. Set at the south end of the broad watery expanse of the Annapolis Basin, Digby is home to the world's largest inshore scallop fleet. These boats drag the ocean bottom nearby and bring back the succulent Digby scallops famous throughout Canada. The town itself is an active community where life centers around the fishing boats, convivial neighborhoods of wood-frame houses, and no-frills seafood eating places. (It also serves as Nova Scotia's gateway for those arriving from Saint John, New Brunswick, via ferry. The ferry terminal is on Route 303, just west of Digby.)

Aside from the Digby Pines Golf Resort and Spa, which warrants its own trip (see below), the town is worth checking out if you have a few hours to kill before catching a ferry back to Saint John.

DIGBY NECK ★

Look at a map of Nova Scotia and you'll see the thin strand of **Digby Neck** extending southwest from Annapolis Basin. You might guess from its appearance on the map that

it's a low, scrubby sand spit. You would be wrong. In fact, it's a long, bony finger of high ridges, spongy bogs, dense forest, and ocean views. The last two knuckles of this narrow peninsula are islands, both of which are connected via quick, 10-minute ferries across straits swept by currents as strong as 9 knots.

Although neither the neck nor the islands have much in the way of services for tourists—just one real lodge, a couple of B&Bs, a few general stores—it's worth the drive if you're a connoisseur of end-of-the-world remoteness. The town of **Sandy Cove** on the mainland is picture-perfect, with its three prominent church steeples rising from the forest. Both Tiverton on Long Island and Westport on Brier Island are unadorned fishing villages where pickup trucks are held together with Bondo and bailing wire. You get the distinct feeling that life hasn't changed much in the past few decades—or at least since 1960, when roads were finally paved on **Brier Island.** And, in fact, it really hasn't.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Digby is Nova Scotia's gateway for those arriving from **Saint John,** New Brunswick, via ferry. The ferry terminal is on Route 303, west of Digby. If you're indeed arriving by ferry and want to visit the town before pushing on, look sharp for signs directing you downtown from the bypass, lest you end up on Route 101 and headed out of town by mistake. Coming from the rest of Nova Scotia, take exit 26 off Route 101 to reach Digby.

Surprisingly, you can even get to Digby without a car. **Acadian Bus Lines** (**www.acadianbus.com**) runs a daily service from Halifax. The trip takes about 4½ hours and costs about C$50 one-way.

From Digby, Route 217 runs about 45 miles south to **Brier Island.** Two **ferries** bridge the islands, and they run 24 hours a day, year-round. The first boat leaves **East Ferry** (about a 45-min. drive from Digby) on the mainland for **Tiverton,** Long Island every half-hour; the second ferry departs Long Island for **Brier Island** on the hour. (The ferries are timed so that you can drive directly from one ferry to the next, if you don't dally too much on the road between.) The fare is C$5 for each ferry (C$10 total), and you pay each full fare on the outbound leg.

VISITOR INFORMATION The province maintains a **visitor information center** (✆ **902/245-2201**) in Digby on Route 303 (on your right shortly after you disembark from the Saint John ferry), at 237 Shore Rd. It's open from early May through October. There's also a **municipal tourist information center** on the harbor at 110 Montague Row (✆ **902/245-5714**), open daily from May until mid-October.

On Long Island, you can pick up local information inside **the Islands Museum** (✆ **902/839-2034**) in Tiverton. The museum opens from June through late September and is free to enter.

If you're in the area in early August, don't miss Digby Scallop Days, a salty local celebration of the shellfish that gives the town its fame. Expect scallop-shucking contests (aw, shucks!), raffles, food, busking, and general merriment. A fancy event? No. A slice of real Nova Scotia life? Yes.

Exploring Digby Neck

BICYCLING Brier Island is a great destination for mountain bikers. Just 6 by 2km wide (4 by 1½ miles), it's the right scale for spending a slow afternoon poking around the dirt roads that lead to two of the island's red-and-white lighthouses. Brier Island maps are available free at island stores and lodges. If you park your car on the Long Island side and

take your bike over on the ferry, you'll save money; there's no charge for bikes or pedestrians.

You can rent a bike cheaply at the local youth hostel, the **Digby Backpackers Inn** (✆ **902/245-4573**) at 168 Queen St. (see "Where to Stay," below).

HIKING On **Long Island,** two short but rewarding woodland hikes bring you to open vistas of St. Mary's Bay and the Bay of Fundy. The trailhead for the first, the 800m (half-mile) hike to **Balancing Rock** ★★, is about 4km (2½ miles) south of the **Tiverton** ferry on Route 217; look for a well-marked parking area on the left. The trail crosses through swamp, bog, and forest and is straight and flat—until the last 91m (300 ft.), when it plummets nearly straight down a sheer bluff to the ocean's edge via some 169 steps. At the base, a series of boardwalks leads you over the surging ocean to get a dead-on view of the tall column of basalt balancing improbably atop another column.

For the second short hike, return to the parking lot and drive 5km (3 miles) south to the **picnic area** on the right. From the parking lot atop the hill, a hike of about 1km (a half-mile) descends gradually through a forest of moss, ferns, and roots to the Fundy shore. Note that the coastline here looks almost lunar, its dark rock marbled with thin streaks of quartz. You're likely to have this coast all to yourself, since few travelers ever venture here.

Farther along, **Brier Island** is also laced with **hiking trails** offering fantastic opportunities for seaside exploration. Pick up one of the maps offered free around the island. One good place to take a walk is at the **Grand Passage Lighthouse** (turn right after disembarking the ferry and continue until you can't go any farther). Park near the light and walk through the stunted pines to the open meadows on the western shore, where you can pick up a **coastal trail**.

WHALE-WATCHING ★ Here in the Bay of Fundy, ocean currents mingle and the vigorous tides cause upwelling, which brings a rich assortment of plankton up to the surface from the briny depths. That means a free, all-you-can-eat buffet for whales, which feed on these minuscule creatures. So your chances of seeing whales are good in these parts. As the fishing industry has declined, the number of fishermen offering whale-watching tours has boomed. Most of these are down-home operations on converted lobster boats—don't expect gleaming ships with comfy seats and full-service cafeterias like you might find in bigger cities or along the New England coast.

The decline of local fish stocks means that the boats need to head farther out into the bay to find whales than used to be, but you'll still almost always see fin, minke, or humpback whales. (Right, sperm, blue, and pilot whales, along with the seldom-seen orca, have also occasionally been spotted over the years.) Plan on spending around C$50 per adult for a 3- to 4-hour cruise, less per child.

There are plenty of choices, depending only on which port you want to sail out of. Local resident Penny Graham operates **Mariner Cruises** (✆ **800/239-2189** or 902/839-2346) in **Westport** on Brier Island, using the *Chad and Sisters Two,* which is equipped with a heated cabin. Both whale- and bird-watching tours are offered.

Pirate's Cove Whale & Seabird Cruises (✆ **888/480-0004** or 902/839-2242), located in **Tiverton,** has been operating offshore cruises since 1990; several tours are offered daily aboard the *Fundy Cruiser* and *Fundy Voyager.*

Petite Passage Whale Watch (✆ **902/834-2226**) sails the *Passage Provider 04,* which has a partially covered deck, out of **East Ferry.** It runs two to three cruises daily from June through October for C$49 per person or C$28 per child age 2 to 12.

For a saltier adventure, **Ocean Explorations** (✆ **877/654-2341** or 902/839-2417) offers tours on rigid-hulled inflatable Zodiacs. The largest boat holds up to a dozen passengers and moves with tremendous speed and dampness through the fast currents and frequent chop around the islands and the open bay; guests are provided with survival suits for warmth and safety. The 2- to 3-hour trips cost C$60 per adult, less for children, seniors, students, and group members.

Where to Stay & Dine

In addition to the choices listed below, there are two hostels in the area. The **Digby Backpackers Inn** ★ (✆ **902/245-4573;** www.digbyhostel.com), at 168 Queen St., is newish and quite good. Run by an international couple, it offers dorm beds for C$25 a night and double rooms for C$60; all bathrooms are shared, but breakfast is included with the rate. The **Brier Island Hostel** (✆ **902/839-2273;** www.brierislandhostel.com), on Brier Island, offers beds for C$18 adults, C$9 children 6 and under.

Brier Island Lodge ★ (Finds) Built to jump-start local ecotourism, the Brier Island Lodge is a basic but great find thanks to eye-popping views. You'll find a rustic-modern motif, with log-cabin construction and soaring glass windows overlooking the Grand Passage 40m (131 ft.) below; most rooms overlook the ocean and a lighthouse. Inside, they feature all the usual motel amenities, plus a few unexpected touches (double Jacuzzis in the pricier rooms). A well-regarded dining room serves up traditional favorites, and local fishermen congregate in an airy lounge in the evening to play cards and watch a satellite TV. Hiking trails connect directly from the lodge to the Fundy shore. Breakfasts feature fresh eggs from hens at the adjacent farm. But don't plan on sleeping in; as the lodge notes, "When the sun comes up, our roosters will be happy to let you know."

Brier Island (P.O. Box 39), Westport, NS B0V 1H0. ✆ **800/662-8355** or 902/839-2300. Fax 902/839-2006. www.brierisland.com. 40 units. C$79–C$149 double. MC, V. **Amenities:** Dining room; lounge; bike rental. *In room:* A/C, TV, Jacuzzi (4 rooms).

Digby Pines Golf Resort and Spa ★★ (Kids) Red-roofed Digby Pines is situated on 121 hectares (300 acres), with marvelous views of the Annapolis Basin. The imposing stucco-and-stone resort is surrounded by the aforementioned pines, and it's a throwback to an era when moneyed families headed to fashionable resorts for the entire summer. Built in 1929 in Norman château style, the inn is owned by the province of Nova Scotia—which does a good job emphasizing comfort over mere historic re-creation. The gracious lobby features old-world touches like Corinthian capitals, floral couches, and parquet floors; guest rooms vary in size and views (ask for a waterview room; there's no extra charge), and are basically furnished and equipped with ceiling fans. Thirty or so cottages have one to three bedrooms each (guests share the living rooms), most of them featuring fireplaces, air-conditioning, and mini-refrigerators. Amenities are the reason for coming: A newish Aveda spa offers a full menu of treatments and services, an 18-hole Stanley Thompson–designed golf course threads its way through pines and over a babbling brook, and the kids' program is exemplary. The resort's Annapolis Room is open for three meals daily, serving Nova Scotian cuisine with a French flair. Reserve and dress up.

Shore Rd. (P.O. Box 70), Digby, NS B0V 1A0. ✆ **800/667-4637** or 902/245-2511. Fax 902/245-6133. www.digbypines.ca. 147 units. C$159–C$442 double. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; bike rentals; children's center; concierge; golf course; health club; heated outdoor pool; sauna; spa; 2 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C (cottages only), TV, fridge (cottages only), hair dryer.

THE ACADIAN COAST

The Acadian Coast (called the "French Shore" by English-speaking locals) runs roughly from Salmon River to St. Bernard. This hardscrabble coast, where the fields were once littered with glacial rocks and boulders, was one of the few areas where Acadians were allowed to resettle after their 1755 expulsion from English Canada.

Today, you'll find abundant evidence of the robust Acadian culture, from the ubiquitous Stella Maris (the Acadian tricolor flag, with its prominent star—you'll get what I mean as soon as you get here) to the towering Catholic church around which each town seems to cluster. This region is more populous and developed than much of the rest of the Nova Scotia coast, and thus lacks somewhat the wild aesthetic that travelers often seek. It has also failed to put its best foot forward touristically; there's little to no PR seeping out of this stretch of coast, and few accommodations or fine-dining experiences to be found. On the other hand, of course, that's what makes it so charming: it is what it is, and won't change just to make a buck.

Essentials

GETTING THERE The Acadian Coast is traversed by Route 1. Speedy Route 101 runs parallel, but some distance inland; take any exit from 28 to 32 and follow Route 1 to your heart's content.

VISITOR INFORMATION It's best to collect information in the major towns bracketing either end of this stretch; that means heading to either the **Yarmouth Visitor Centre** (p. 84) at 228 Main St. or Digby's **information center** (p. 79) on Route 303.

Exploring the Acadian Coast

A drive along this seaside route offers a pleasant detour, in both pace and culture. You can drive its whole length, or pick up segments by exiting from Route 101 and heading shoreward. What follows is a selected sampling of attractions along the coast, from north to south.

- **St. Mary's Church** ★★★, Church Point. Many towns along the Acadian coast are proud of their impressive churches, but none is quite so amazing as St. Mary's. You can't miss it; it's adjacent to the campus of Université Sainte-Anne, the sole French-speaking university in Nova Scotia. The imposing, gray-shingled church has the feel of a European cathedral made of stone—yet St. Mary's, which was built between 1903 and 1905, is made entirely of wood. It's said to be the tallest and biggest wooden building on the entire continent. How this tiny village afforded it is beyond me. Outside, the church is impressive enough—a steeple rises some 56m (184 ft.) above the grounds, with some 40 tons of rock helping to provide stability in the wind. Inside, though, it's even more extraordinary—entire tree trunks serve as columns (they're covered in plaster to lend a more traditional appearance), for instance, and there are plenty of windows and arches to give architectural weight to the place. A small museum in the rear offers glimpses of church history. Admission is by donation; leave one.
- **Rapure Acadienne Ltd.** (✆ **902/769-2172**), Church Point. Rappie pie is an Acadian whole-meal pie, typically made with beef or chicken. The main ingredient is grated potatoes, from which the moisture has been extracted and replaced with chicken broth. The full and formal name is "pâté a la rapure," but look for signs for "rapure" or "rappie pie" along Route 1 on the Acadian Coast. Locals argue over which kitchen

does it best, but as far as I'm concerned, one place is just good as the next—except this one, an unassuming shop on Route 1 just south of Church Point. You can pick up a freshly baked beef or chicken rappie pie here for about C$5. (It costs about a dollar more for a clam pie.) Commandeer an outdoor picnic table to enjoy your meal, or take it to the shady campus of Université Sainte-Anne, a few minutes' drive north. The shop is open daily year-round, usually from around 8am.

- **La Vieille Maison** ★ (✆ **902/645-2389**), Meteghan. This small historical museum displays artifacts of Acadian life in the 19th century. Look for the scrap of original French wallpaper uncovered during restoration of the summer bedroom. Open daily in summer. Admission is free.
- **Smuggler's Cove,** Meteghan. This small provincial picnic area a few minutes south of town has a set of steps running steeply down to a cobblestone cove. From here, you'll have a view of a tidal cave across the way. Rum runners were said to have used this cave—about 5m (16 ft.) high and 18m (59 ft.) deep—as a hideout during the Prohibition era. Truth or tourism-boosting legend? Who knows? Nobody's talking. But admission's free.
- **Mavillette Beach** ★★, Mavillette. This beautiful crescent beach has nearly all the ingredients for a pleasant summer afternoon—lots of sand, grassy dunes, changing stalls, a nearby snack bar with ice cream, and views across the water to scenic Cape Mary. All that's lacking are picnic tables and an ocean warm enough to actually swim in; it's seriously frigid here, though some hardy souls do give it a try. The beach, managed as a provincial park, is 1km (⅔ mile) off Route 1, and the turnoff is well marked. It's open mid-May through mid-October. Admission is free.
- **Port Maitland Beach** ★★, Port Maitland. Another provincial park beach—and a very long one at that—Port Maitland Beach is near the breakwater and town wharf. It isn't as scenic or pristine as Mavillette Beach; it's closer to Yarmouth and attracts larger crowds, principally families. But I really enjoy it anyway, because you can walk for miles in solitude here. This makes a good first stroll in the province if you're just off the overnight ferry. They have picnic tables, too. Signs direct you to the beach from the village center.

Where to Stay

Accommodations are pretty thin on the ground here; most are small, unpretentious B&Bs offering varying degrees of comfort. They are quite affordable, however; you could pay as little as C$50 for a night in a double room here. It all depends on what you want. Push onward to the Annapolis Valley if you want a fancy inn, or backtrack to Yarmouth for a family motel or chain hotel if you'll be leaving the province by ferry or heading for the South Shore next. Traipse inland to **Kejimkujik National Park** (p. 76) if you're longing to camp in the woods.

If you're determined to stay in the land of Evangeline, no sweat. There's a good B&B, **A la Maison D'Amitie** ★ (✆ **902/645-2601;** www.houseoffriendship.ca), on a cliff top down a dirt road in Mavillette, with two oceanfront suites for C$175 in peak season and a much more expansive, ground-floor suite with vanity sinks and a Jacuzzi for C$350 per night. (Rates are a bit lower off season.) The home boasts an impressive 152m (500 ft.) of ocean frontage in addition to its views, and should be very welcoming—the name is French for "House of Friendship." You might also try **L'Auberge au Havre du Capitaine** (✆ **902/769-2001;** http://havreducapitaine.itgo.com) on Route 1 in Meteghan River, a regular motel with 18 rooms at rates ranging from about C$75 to C$119 per night; a

few even have air-jetted Jacuzzi tubs. As a bonus, there's a local Acadian-cuisine restaurant on the premises.

Still stuck? The log **Trout Point Lodge Wilderness Resort** (p. 86) is also an option. It's covered below in the Yarmouth section, but it's actually inland from the French Shore rather than part of it.

YARMOUTH

The constant lament of Yarmouth restaurateurs and shopkeepers is this: The summer tourists who stream off incoming ferries rarely linger even a few minutes in their city before mashing the accelerator and speeding off to higher-marquee venues up the coast.

There might be a reason for that. Yarmouth is a pleasant burg that offers some noteworthy historic architecture dating from the golden ages of seafaring. But this town's not terribly unique, and thus not high on the list of places to spend a few days. It's a little too big (pop. 7,200) to be charming, a little too small to generate any urban buzz or vitality. It does have the flavor of a handy pit stop rather than a true destination, even if recent redevelopment efforts have spruced up the waterfront and added some evening entertainment options during the summer.

Of course you could linger a few hours while awaiting the ferry (the Maine-bound ferries all leave in late afternoon), or to while away an afternoon while looping around the coast. But it's probably not worth more than a half-day of your time. Take time to follow the self-guided walking tour, enjoy a meal, or wander around the waterfront, which is slowly reawakening from its torpor.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Yarmouth is at the convergence of two of the province's principal highways, routes 101 and 103. It's approximately 300km (186 miles) from Halifax. Yarmouth is also the gateway for the CAT ferries connecting to Bar Harbor, Maine (see "By Ferry," p. 32).

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Yarmouth Visitor Centre** (✆ **902/742-5033**) is at 228 Main St., just up the hill from the ferry in a modern, shingled building you simply can't miss. Both provincial and municipal tourist offices are located here, open June through mid-October daily from about 8am to 7pm.

Exploring the Area

The tourist bureau and the local historical society publish a very informative walking-tour brochure covering downtown Yarmouth. It's well worth requesting at the Yarmouth Visitor Centre (see above). The guide offers general tips on what to look for in local architectural styles (how do you tell the difference between Georgian and Classic Revival?), as well as brief histories of significant buildings. The entire tour is 4km (2½ miles) long.

The most scenic side trip—an ideal excursion by bike or car—is to **Cape Forchu** and the **Yarmouth Light** ★. Head west on Main Street (Rte. 1) for 2km (1¼ miles) from the visitor center, then turn left at the horse statue. The road winds out to the cape, past seawalls and working lobster wharves, meadows, and old homes.

When the road finally ends, you'll have arrived at the red-and-white-striped concrete lighthouse that marks this harbor's entrance. (The lighthouse dates from the early 1960s, when it replaced a much older octagonal lighthouse that succumbed to wind and time.)

There's a tiny photographic exhibit on the cape's history in the visitor center in the keeper's house.

Leave enough time to ramble around the dramatic rock-and-grass bluffs—part of Leif Ericson Picnic Park—that surround the lighthouse. Don't miss the short trail out to the point below the light. Bright red picnic tables and benches are scattered about; bring lunch or dinner if the weather is right.

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (Western Branch) ★★ Kids A satellite of the famous art gallery in Halifax, this AGNS is housed in the former Royal Bank building at the heart of Yarmouth's downtown. Its changing exhibits draw from the mothership's permanent collections, and might include a rumination on the history of flight; a curated showing of folk art from the Maritimes; or a collection of tall-ship paintings. The museum fills a much-needed gap in Yarmouth's cultural scene, and staff here even offer various summer art classes and workshops. Plus this: If you visit this museum first, you can deduct the admission from the price of your admission later at the Halifax museum. If you went to the Halifax museum first, this one's free. For that reason alone, you should definitely duck in here whenever you're in town and at a loss for things to do (or waiting for the ferry).

340 Main St. ✆ **902/749-2248.** Admission C$5 adults, C$4 seniors, C$3.50 students, C$2 children age 6 to 17, C$12 families; admission free with proof of visit to AGNS Halifax. Daily 10am–5pm, Thurs to 8pm in summer.

Firefighters' Museum of Nova Scotia Kids This two-story museum will appeal mostly to confirmed fire buffs, historians, and impressionable young children. The museum is home to a varied collection of early firefighting equipment, with hand-drawn pumpers the centerpiece of the collection. Kids love the 1933 vintage Chev Bickle Pumper because they can don helmets and take the wheel for some pretend-I'm-a-fireman time. Also showcased here are uniforms, badges, and pennants. Also look for the collection of photos of notable Nova Scotia fires. If you're into that.

451 Main St. ✆ **902/742-5525.** Admission C$3 adults, C$2.50 seniors, C$1.50 children, C$6 families. July–Aug Mon–Sat 9am–9pm, Sun 10am–5pm; June and Sept Mon–Sat 9am–5pm; Oct–May Mon–Fri 9am–4pm, Sat 1–4pm.

Where to Stay

Fifteen kilometers (9⅓ miles) west of town on Route 1 is the **Lake Breeze Campground** (✆ **902/649-2332**), a privately run spot with the appealingly low-key character of a small municipal campground. It has 50 campsites for C$17 to C$25, some right on the shores of tiny **Lake Darling** (you can rent a boat inexpensively), as well as five small cottages (for C$60 to C$99 per night); everything is well tended by the owners. The campground is open from around mid-May until mid-October. You can also rent boats here.

Yarmouth is home to a number of mom-and-pop and chain motels, all mostly the same in character (which is to say, lacking it). Some of the better choices in town are the **Best Western Mermaid Motel,** 545 Main St. (✆ **800/528-1234** or 902/742-7821), with rates of around C$90 to C$180 double; **Comfort Inn,** 96 Starrs Rd. (✆ **800/228-5150** or 902/742-1119), at around C$85 to C$195 double; and the business-hotel-like **Rodd Grand Hotel,** 417 Main St. (✆ **800/565-7633** or 902/742-2446), more expensive at rates ranging from C$150 to C$225 double per night.

Guest-Lovitt House ★★ A helpful reader tipped me off to this grandiose-looking mansion just blocks from Yarmouth's ferry terminal, now a small B&B owned by two locals that might be the town's best lodgings. Four rooms await the traveler, each with four-poster king or queen beds draped in white covers, lacy drapes, televisions with DVD players, and lightly floral wallpapers or pastel schemes to accent. Antique furnishings in each room include touches such as fireplaces, writing desks, wingback chairs, loveseats, and even—in the case of the Dr. Webster Room—a little private balcony. An outdoor hot tub provides faux-California experiences, a good breakfast is included, and there's a gazebo for sitting. Two of the rooms can be combined into a suite (at a discount) when need be.

12 Parade St., Yarmouth, NS B5A 3A4. ✆ **866/742-0372** or 902/742-0372. 4 units. C$119-C$159 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Jacuzzi. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Harbour's Edge B&B ★ Finds Now this is truth in advertising: This attractive early Victorian home (built 1864) sits on a quiet hectare (2½ acres) and 76m (250 ft.) of harbor frontage, where the scenery changes twice per day with the tides. This was the very first parcel of land in Yarmouth to be owned by a European, but before that local native peoples had camped and fished here for ages. Today you can lounge on the lawn watching herons, hawks, and kingfishers, and it's hard to believe you're just a few minutes from a big international ferry terminal. The inn opened in 1997 after 3 years of restoration, and rooms are lightly furnished to highlight the architectural integrity of the design. All four rooms sport high ceilings and handsome spruce floors. The attractive Audrey Kenney Room is biggest, but the Clara Caie has better views of the harbor (though the private bathroom and its claw-foot tub are down the hall). The Georgie Allen has a private hallway and clear harbor view, as well. You'll feel safe here, too, because one of the two innkeepers is a Mountie: a Canadian cop.

12 Vancouver St., Yarmouth, NS B5A 2N8. ✆ **902/742-2387.** www.harboursedge.ns.ca. 4 units. C$135–C$150 double. Rates include full br eakfast. MC, V. Head t oward Cape Forchu (see abo ve); watch for the inn shortly after turning at the horse statue. *In room:* Hair dryer, no phone.

Lakelawn Motel The clean, well-kept Lakelawn Motel offers basic motel rooms in fresh, bluish colors with newer carpeting very close to the ferry landing. It's been a downtown Yarmouth mainstay since the 1950s, when the main Victorian house (where the office is located) was moved back from the road to make room for the motel wings. The house also has four B&B-style guest rooms upstairs, each furnished simply with antiques, if you're looking for something more traditional. Breakfast here, however, costs extra.

641 M ain St., Yarmouth, NS B5A 1K2. ✆ **877/664-0664** or 902/742-3588. w ww.lakelawnmotel.com. 34 units. C$59–C$99 double. Meals available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. *In room:* TV, no phone (some units).

Trout Point Lodge Wilderness Resort ★ This rustic property, about 25 miles north-northwest of Yarmouth, emphasizes its rural setting and the culinary arts. Modeled loosely on an Adirondack hunting lodge, the property was built from spruce logs and hand-cut local granite. A natural feeling pervades, from windows letting in views of forest and river to fireplaces in the public areas. Eight standard rooms come with log walls, original art, log-and-twig furniture, loveseats, and work desks; two add stone fireplaces and decks on the river; others sport wood stoves, high ceilings, or bay windows. Two suites have canopy beds, sofas, and Jacuzzi tubs, while two cottages with various other amenities are rented out in part or whole; both are kitted out with full kitchens. The

property offers canoes, kayaks, and paddleboats for exploring the local system of rivers and lakes (there's a dock and platforms for swimming as well)—but Internet access costs extra. There's also an ongoing program of cooking lessons and culinary getaways here, plus a dining room serving prix fixe dinners.

189 Trout Point Rd., off Rte. 203 (P.O. Box 456), E. Kemptville, NS B0W 1Y0. ✆ **877/812-0112** or 902/761-2142. www.troutpoint.com. 12 units. Peak season C$240–C$525 double. Additional 15% service fee charged. Meal plans available. Ask about packages. MC, V. No meals late Oct to late May. From Yarmouth or Halifax, take Hwy. 103 to Shelburne-Ohio exit and continue 45 min. to E. Branch Rd. on right. **Amenities:** Restaurant; hot tub; watersports equipment. *In room:* No phone.

Where to Dine

Quick-N-Tasty (Kids) SEAFOOD The name about says it all. This country-cooking joint a mile or two from the incoming ferries from Maine has long been a hit with locals. The restaurant is adorned with the sort of paneling that was au courant in the 1970s, and meals are likewise old-fashioned and generous. The emphasis here is on seafood; you can order fish either fried or broiled, but go for the hot open-faced lobster club sandwich—it's gaining international foodie acclaim. The seafood casserole and the blueberry desserts are also notable.

Rte. 1, Dayton (from downtown Yarmouth, follow Rte. 3 west to Rte. 1). ✆ **902/742-6606.** Sandwiches C$3–C$12; main courses C$7–C$18. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–8pm. Closed mid-Dec to Feb. Just east of Yarmouth on the north side of Rte. 1.

Rudder's Seafood Restaurant & Brewpub ★ BREWPUB Yarmouth's first (and Nova Scotia's fourth) brewpub opened in 1997 on the waterfront. It occupies an old warehouse dating from the mid-1800s, where you can see the wear and tear of the decades on the battered floor and in the stout beams and rafters. The place has been nicely spruced up, though, and the menu features creative pub fare plus Acadian and Cajun specialties (like rappie pie and jambalaya), as well as lobster suppers and planked salmon. The steaks are quite good, as is the beer. In summer, there's outdoor seating on a deck with a view of the harbor across the parking lot.

96 Water St. ✆ **902/742-7311.** Sandwiches C$4–C$11; entrees C$10–C$24. AE, DC, MC, V. Mid-Apr to mid-Oct daily 11am–11pm (shorter hours in spring and fall). Closed mid-Oct to mid-Apr.

7 SOUTH SHORE ★★

The Atlantic coast between Yarmouth and Halifax is that quaint, maritime Nova Scotia you see on laminated place mats and calendars. Lighthouses and weathered, shingled buildings perch at the rocky edge of the sea, as if tenuously trespassing on the ocean's good graces. But as rustic and beautiful as this area is, you might find it a bit monotonous to visit *every* quaint village along this coastline—which involves some 300-plus kilometers (200-plus miles) of slow, twisting road along water's edge. If your heart is set on fully exploring this fabled landscape, then, be sure to leave enough time for the many nooks and crannies along this stretch of the coast. Towns such as Lunenburg, Mahone Bay, and Peggy's Cove are well worth the time.

It's sensible to allow more time here for one more reason: fog. When the cool waters of the Arctic currents mix with the warm summer air over land, the results are predictably soupy. The fog certainly adds atmosphere. But it can also slow driving to a crawl.

SHELBURNE

Shelburne is a historic town with unimpeachable pedigree. Settled in 1783 by United Empire Loyalists fleeing New England after the Revolution and the Treaty of Paris, the town swelled with newcomers until by 1784 it is believed to have had a population of 10,000—larger than the Montréal, Halifax, or Québec of the time. With the recent declines in both boat building and fishing, however, the town has edged back into that dim economic twilight familiar to other seaside villages (it now has a population of about 2,000), and the waterfront began to deteriorate in spite of valiant preservation efforts.

And then Hollywood came calling. In 1992, the film *Mary Silliman's War* was filmed here. The producers found the waterfront to be a reasonable facsimile of 1776 Fairfield, Connecticut. The film crew spruced up the town a bit, and buried local power lines along the waterfront.

Two years later, director Roland Joffe arrived to film his spectacularly miscast *Scarlet Letter,* starring Demi Moore, Gary Oldman, and Robert Duvall. Those film crews buried more power lines, built 15 "historic" structures near the waterfront (most demolished after filming), dumped tons of rubble to create dirt lanes (since removed), and generally made the place look like 17th-century Boston.

When the crew departed, it left behind three new buildings and an impressive shingled steeple you can see from anywhere in town. Among these "new old" buildings is the waterfront cooperage across from the Cooper's Inn. The original structure, clad in asphalt shingles, was generally considered an eyesore and was torn down, replaced by the faux-17th-century building. Today, barrelmakers here painstakingly make and sell traditional handcrafted wooden barrels in what amounts to a souvenir of a notable Hollywood flop.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Shelburne is about 209km (130 miles) southwest of Halifax on Route 3. It's a short hop from Route 103 via either exit 25 (southbound) or exit 26 (northbound).

VISITOR INFORMATION The local **visitor information center** (✆ **902/875-4547**) is in a tidy waterfront building at the corner of King and Dock streets. It's open daily mid-May to October.

Exploring Historic Shelburne

The central historic district runs along the waterfront, where you can see legitimately old buildings, Hollywood fascimiles (see above), and spectacular views of the harbor from small, grassy parks. There's a lot more in the district, too, including a helpful little tourist office at the bend in the road (see above), gift shops, a B&B (the Cooper's Inn, reviewed below), a husband-and-wife team of coopers making barrels in an open shop (technically, it's not open to the public, but ask nicely for a look), a kayaking and outdoor adventure center, and the **Sea Dog Saloon** (✆ **902/875-2862**) at the very end of the road at 1 Dock St. It's sometimes open as late as 2am. A block inland from the water is Shelburne's more commercial stretch, where you can find services that include banks, shops, and snacks.

Shelburne Historic C omplex ★ Kids The historic complex is an association of four local museums located within steps of each other. The most engaging is the **Dory Shop Museum,** right on the waterfront. On the first floor you can admire examples of the simple, elegant boatbuilding craft (said to be invented in Shelburne) and view videos

about the late Sidney Mahaney, a master builder who worked in this shop from the time he was 17 until he was 96. Then head upstairs, where all the banging is going on. While you're there, ask about the difference between a Shelburne dory and a Lunenburg dory.

The **Shelburne County Museum** features a potpourri of locally significant artifacts from the town's Loyalist past. Most intriguing is the 1740 fire pumper; it was made in London and imported here in 1783. Behind the museum is the austerely handsome **Ross-Thomson House,** built in 1784 through 1785. The first floor contains a general store as it might have looked in 1784, with bolts of cloth and cast-iron teakettles. Upstairs is a militia room with displays of antique and reproduction weaponry. The fourth museum, the **Muir-Cox Shipyard** and its Interpretive Centre, was added most recently and features maritime displays of barks, sailboats, yachts, and more. If you're interested in these sorts of things, you could easily spend a half-day here, particularly if you're bringing children who are captivated by the craftspeople.

Dock St. (P.O. Box 39), Shelburne, NS B0T 1W0. ✆ **902/875-3219.** Admission to all 4 museums C$8 adults, free for children under 16; individual museums C$3 adults, free for children under 16; all museums free on Sunday mornings. June to mid-Oct daily 9:30am–5:30pm (Dory Shop, June to Sept). Closed mid-Oct to May.

Where to Stay

Just across the harbor from Shelburne, **The Islands Provincial Park** ★ (✆ **902/875-4304**) offers 62 quiet campsites on 500 waterside acres from May through September. Some sites are right on the harbor, with a front-row seat and great views of the historic village; ask about those sites' availability first. There are no hookups for RVs here, another reason to consider it as a quiet overnight getaway. Campsites here cost C$23 apiece.

The Cooper's Inn ★★ Finds Facing the harbor in the Dock Street historic area, the impeccably historic Cooper's Inn was originally built by Loyalist merchant George Gracie in 1785. Subsequent additions and updates have been historically sympathetic. The downstairs sitting rooms set the mood nicely, with worn wood floors, muted wall colors (mustard and khaki green), and classical music in the background. A courtyard with a pond and bell fountain is a tranquil recent addition. Rooms in the main building feature painted wood floors (they're carpeted in the cooper-shop annex) and are decorated in a comfortably historic-country style. A third-floor suite features wonderful detailing, two sleeping alcoves, and harbor views—worth the extra cost. The George Gracie Room has a four-poster bed and water view, the small Roderick Morrison Room a wonderful claw-foot tub perfect for a late-evening soak, and the Harbour Suite a harbor-view tub and massage chair. Owners Paul and Pat DeWar often leave packages of treats and passes to the town's historic complex in rooms. Yes, they even have Wi-Fi access.

36 Dock St., Shelburne, NS B0T 1W0. ✆ **800/688-2011** or 902/875-4656. www.thecoopersinn.com. 8 units. C$100–C$185 double and suite. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 dining rooms. *In room:* TV/VCR, hair dryer, kitchenette (1 unit).

Where to Dine

In addition to the two choices listed below (one fancy, one very downscale), **Lothar's Café** (✆ **902/875-3697**), at 149 Water St., is also a good option when in town. Chef Lothar (yes, really) serves a sort of Swiss-Austrian-Germanic cuisine, plus fondue for dessert—and, of course, fried fish, this being Nova Scotia. It's closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Charlotte Lane Café ★★ CAFE The 2008 closing of the venerable Shelburne Cafe and bakery on Dock Street left a huge gap in this town's local food scene. But have no fear: The Charlotte Lane Café rushed into that gap and has since successfully bridged it. Situated on a tiny lane between the village's waterfront and its main commercial street, it's a bit hard to find, but worth it once you do. The kitchen's eclectic lunch and dinner items range from straightforward pasta dishes to Thai-spiced tofu and noodles, racks of lamb with a port wine-orange sauce, seared scallops, and a filet mignon-lobster combination. You can go heavy or light, since the salads and starters like eggplant picatta are good as well. There's a wine list, too, plus the likes of brown sugar-and-buttermilk apple pie, sticky toffee pudding, sorbets, and baked cheesecakes for dessert.

13 Charlotte Lane (bt w. Water and Dock sts .). ✆ **902/875-3314.** Lunch items C$10, dinner items and larger entrees C$16–C$21. MC, V. Tues–Sat 9am–11pm.

Mr. Fish ★ Value SEAFOOD You can't miss this little fried-fish stand on the side of busy Route 3, near a shopping center; what the place lacks in location, it more than makes up for in character and good simple seafood. Matronly line cooks fry messes of haddock, scallops, and shrimp, perfectly jacketed in light crusts, and the local clientele streams in for takeout. As if that weren't good enough, they then dole out great fries and crunchy coleslaw on the side—and a smile. You eat outside on the picnic tables (but watch for bees); if it's raining, you'll have to eat in your car.

104 King St. (Rte. 3, north of town center). ✆ **902/875-3474.** Meals C$3–C$13. V. Mon–Sat 11am–7pm (Fri and holidays until 9pm); Sun noon–7pm.

LUNENBURG ★★★

Lunenburg is just plain lovable, compressing everything you came to see in Nova Scotia into one tidy package: ocean tides, fishing boats, terrain, architecture, museums, and fish. It's one of Nova Scotia's most historic *and* most appealing villages, a fact recognized in 1995 when UNESCO declared the old downtown a World Heritage Site.

The town was first settled in 1753, primarily by German, Swiss, and French colonists. It was laid out on the "model town" plan then in vogue. (Savannah, Georgia, and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, are also laid out using similar plans.) The plan consists of seven north–south streets, intersected by nine east–west streets. Lunenburg is located on a harbor and flanked by steep hills—yet the town's planners decided not to bend the rules for geography. As a result, some of the town's streets go straight uphill, and can be exhausting to walk.

Still, it's worth trying. About three-quarters of the buildings in the compact downtown date from the 18th and 19th centuries, many of them are possessed of a distinctive style and are painted in bright pastel colors. Looming over all is the architecturally unique, red-and-white painted **Lunenburg Academy** with its exaggerated mansard roof, pointy towers, and extravagant use of ornamental brackets. The school sets a tone for the town the same way the Citadel fort does for Halifax. (The Academy's first two floors are still used as a public school—the top floor was deemed a fire hazard years ago—so the building is open to the public only on special occasions.)

What makes Lunenburg so appealing is its vibrancy. Yes, it's historic, but this is no village stuck in the 19th century. There's life, including a subtle countercultural tang that dates from the 1960s. Look and you'll see evidence of the tie-dye-and-organic crowd in the scattering of natural food shops and funky boutiques. A growing number of art galleries, crafts shops, and souvenir vendors are moving in, making for rewarding browsing.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Lunenburg is about 100km (62 miles) southwest of Halifax on Route 3.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Lunenburg Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **888/615-8305** or 902/634-8100) is located at the top of Blockhouse Hill Road. It's open daily from May through October, usually from 9am to 8pm. It's not in an obvious location, but the brown "?" signs posted around town—and helpful locals—can point you there. Staff here are especially good at helping you find a place to spend the night if you've arrived without reservations. You can also call up local information on the Web at **www.lunenburgns.com**.

Exploring Lunenburg

Leave plenty of time to explore Lunenburg by foot. An excellent walking-tour brochure is available at the tourist office on Blockhouse Hill Road, though supplies are limited. If that's gone, contact the **Lunenburg Board of Trade** (✆ **902/634-3170**) for an excellent local and regional map.

St. John's Anglican Church ★★★ at the corner of Duke and Cumberland streets has got to be one of the most impressive architectural sights in all of eastern Canada—even though it's a reconstruction. The original structure, built in 1754 of oak timbers shipped from Boston, was built in simple New England meetinghouse style. Then, between 1840 and 1880, the church went through a number of additions and was overlaid with ornamentation and shingles to create an amazing example of the "carpenter Gothic" style—one in which many local residents were baptized and attended services throughout their adult lives. All this changed on Halloween night of 2001, however: A fire nearly razed the place, gutting its precious interior and much of the ornate exterior as well. In June of 2005, however, the church reopened after a painstaking 3-year restoration project using new materials but the old design. It's a must-see, and it's free to enter.

While exploring the steep streets of the town, note the architectural influence of its European settlers—especially the Germans. Some local folks made their fortunes from the sea, but serious money was also made by local carpenters who specialized in the ornamental brackets that elaborately adorn dozens of homes here. Many of these homes feature a distinctive architectural element known as the "Lunenburg bump"—a five-sided dormer-and-bay-window combo installed directly over an extended front door. (Other homes feature the simpler, more common Scottish dormer.) Also look for double or triple roofs on some projecting dormers, which serve absolutely no function other than to give the homes bearing them the vague appearance of a wedding cake.

Guided **walking tours** ★ are hosted daily in season by Eric Croft (✆ **902/634-3848;** www.lunenburgwalkingtours.com), a knowledgeable native who brings his huge stock of local lore to the table when discussing local architecture and some rather murky legends surrounding the town's history. The tours have traditionally departed at three times daily (the last, by candlelight) from Bluenose Drive, across from the parking lot for the Atlantic Fisheries Museum. The cost is about C$15 for adults, C$10 for children.

Several boat tours operate from the waterfront, most tied up near the Fisheries Museum. **Lunenburg Whale Watching Tours** (✆ **902/527-7175;** www.novascotiawhalewatching.com) sails in pursuit of several species of whales, along with seals and seabirds, on 3-hour excursions. There are four departures daily from May through October, with reservations recommended (and all bookings must be confirmed 24 hours in advance

with a phone call). Cost is C$48 per adult, C$30 for children age 5 to 14, and C$18 for children under 5 (though infants are free). Alternately, if you have less time, **Star Charters** (✆ **877/386-3535** or 902/634-3535; www.novascotiasailing.com) takes visitors on shorter, mellow 90-minute tours of Lunenburg's inner harbor five times daily from June through October on the *Eastern Star,* a 46-ft. wooden ketch. These tours cost C$24 for adults, C$15 for students, C$11 for children, and C$52 for a full family. (Rates are C$3 higher for sunset cruises, which depart around 7pm.)

Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic ★ Kids The sprawling Fisheries Museum is professionally designed and curated, and deserves credit for taking a topic some consider dull—fishing—and actually making it relatively fun for kids to learn about. The museum has also been upgraded and expanded to keep pace with the times. You'll find aquarium exhibits on the first floor, including a touch-tank for kids and answers to questions like "Do fish sleep?" Look for the massive 7kg (15-lb.) lobster here, estimated to be more than 30 years old. Detailed dioramas depict the whys and hows of fishing from dories, colonial schooners, and other historic vessels. There's a newer exhibit called "Sea Monsters," too (look for me there), and a third-floor section on "Rum Runners." While here you'll learn a whole bunch about the *Bluenose,* a replica of which ties up in Lunenburg when it's not touring elsewhere (see "The Dauntless *Bluenose*" box, below). Outside, you can tour several other vessels—a trawler and a salt-bank schooner among them—and visit a working boat shop and a scallop-shucking house. Allow at least 2 hours to probe all the corners of this engaging museum, which is appropriately right on the waterfront.

On the waterfront. ✆ **866/579-4909** or 902/634-4794. http://museum.gov.ns.ca/fma. Mid-May to mid-Oct admission C$10 adults, C$7 seniors, C$3 children age 6–17, C$22 families; rest of the year C$4 per person (children free). May–Oct daily 9:30am–5:30pm (July–Aug to 7pm); Nov–Apr Mon–Fri, 9:30am–4pm.

Short Road Trips from Lunenburg

Blue Rocks ★★ is a tiny, picturesque harbor a short drive from Lunenburg. It's every bit as scenic as Peggy's Cove, but without any of the tour buses. Head out of town on Pelham Street and just keep driving east, watching for signs indicating either THE POINT or THE LANE, and steer in that direction. The winding roadway gets narrower as the homes get more and more humble. Eventually, you'll reach the tip of the point, where it's just fishing shacks, bright boats, rocks, and views of spruce- and heath-covered islands offshore. I love it out here. The rocks are said to glow in a blue hue in certain light, hence the name; bring a camera and see if you can capture some of it. There's a small bike shop along the road to the neighborhood, the **Lunenburg Bike Barn** (✆ **902/634-3426;** www.bikelunenburg.com) at 579 Blue Rocks Rd., run by the same family for what seems like ages. The Barn's helpful owners will rent you a bike for exploring the surroundings, dispense helpful info, even fix or otherwise service your bike in a pinch.

If you continue onward instead of turning toward "the point," you'll soon come to the enclave of **Stonehurst,** another cluster of homes gathered around a rocky harbor. The road forks along the way; the narrow, winding route to South Stonehurst is somewhat more scenic. This whole area is just ideal for exploring by bicycle, with twisting lanes, great vistas, and limited traffic.

Heading eastward along the other side of Lunenburg Harbor, you'll end up eventually at the **Ovens Natural Park** ★ (✆ **902/766-4621;** www.ovenspark.com) in Riverport, a privately owned campground and day-use park that sits on 1.6km (1 mile) of dramatic coastline. You can follow the seaside trail to view the "ovens" (sea caves, actually) for

which the park was named. A closer view can be had on a **Zodiac boat tour** of the caves (call for prices). The park also features a cafe that serves up basic meals and a great view. Entrance fees are C$8 adults, C$4 seniors and children age 5 to 11, and campsites cost C$25 to C$55 per night—the most expensive sites are on the water, with the best views—and there are discounts for weekly stays. The park is open from May 15 to October 15.

Where to Stay

Lunenburg is chock-full of good inns and B&Bs, but the situation seems to be in constant flux in recent years: most of the prominent properties in town always either seem to be for sale, or to have just recently been sold. As a result, ownership and rates can change on the fly. Call ahead to be sure.

The town's most diverse set of lodgings is that run by the folks at the publike **The Grand Banker Seafood Bar & Grill** (✆ **800/360-1181** or 902/634-3300) at 82 Montague St. The restaurant's owner rents out a total of 17 rooms and suites around the old town, including in the affiliated Brigantine Inn and the former Morash House. Rates depend on amenities and time of year but usually range from around C$70 to C$185; check directly with the inn and restaurant for current prices, availability, and to make bookings.

For budget travelers, a great little **municipal campground** ★ is located next to (and managed by) the visitor center (✆ **888/615-8305** or 902/634-8100) on Blockhouse Hill. It has wonderful views and hookups for RVs. Be aware that the 52 sites are packed in tightly, but the location is well situated for exploring the town. Ask about pitching your tent on the less crowded far side of the information center, up on the grassy hill next to the fort's earthworks. The cost to camp is C$22 to C$31; it's open from mid-May through mid-October.

If that campground's full, **Little Lake Emily Campground** (✆ **902/634-4308**), 3km (2 miles) outside town in the village of **Centre** (head out Route 3), has 85 sites, most with electrical hookups and about half with water and sewer lines. Sites here cost about the same as those at the town's campground.

Alicion Bed & Breakfast ★★ (Finds) Newish owners Lorne and Janet Johanson run this small B&B, formerly the Senator Bed & Breakfast, out of a large, shipshape house in a serene residential neighborhood within walking distance of Lunenburg's Old Town. It gets raves from Frommer's readers. Surprisingly for the house's size, there are only three guest rooms available here; of the three, two have Jacuzzi-like jetted "hydrotherapy" tubs, and the third—furnished with two twin beds, rather than a double—has a Victorian claw-foot tub. Cheers to the Johansons, who have gone "green" with the property, adding organic fabrics and foods to what is already excellent lodging.

66 McDonald St. (P.O. Box 1215), Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0. ✆ **877/634-9358** or 902/634-9358. www.alicionbb.com. 3 units. C$135–C$155 double. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. **Amenities:** Bikes. *In room:* Jacuzzi (2 units), no phone.

Boscawen Inn ★ This imposing 1888 mansion occupies a prime hillside site just a block from the heart of Lunenburg; it was built in 1888 by local Senator H.A.N. Kaulbach, an influential figure in local history (you see his name everywhere) as a wedding gift for his daughter. Today it's considered one of the town's finest examples of the Queen Anne Revival style of architecture. The interior decor is Victorian, although not aggressively so, and it's almost worth staying here just to get access to the main-floor deck and its views of the harbor. Most of the simply furnished rooms are in the main building,

The Dauntless Bluenose

Take an old Canadian dime—one minted before 2001—out of your pocket and have a close look. That graceful schooner on one side? That's the *Bluenose,* Canada's most recognized and most storied ship.

The *Bluenose* was built in Lunenburg in 1921 as a fishing schooner. But it wasn't just any schooner. It was an exceptionally fast schooner.

U.S. and Canadian fishing fleets had raced informally for years. Starting in 1920, the *Halifax Herald* sponsored the International Fisherman's Trophy, which was captured that first year by Americans sailing out of Massachusetts. Peeved, the Nova Scotians set about taking it back. And did they ever. The *Bluenose* retained the trophy for 18 years running, despite the best efforts of Americans to recapture it. The race was shelved as World War II loomed; in the years after the war, fishing schooners were displaced by long-haul, steel-hulled fishing ships, and the schooners sailed into the footnotes of history. The *Bluenose* was sold in 1942 to labor as a freighter in the West Indies. Four years later it foundered and sank off Haiti.

What made the *Bluenose* so unbeatable? Several theories exist. Some said it was because of last-minute hull design changes. Some said it was frost "setting" the timbers as the ship was being built. Still others claim it was blessed with an unusually talented captain and crew.

The replica *Bluenose II* was built in 1963 from the same plans as the original, in the same shipyard, and even by some of the same workers. It has been owned by the province since 1971, and sails throughout Canada and beyond as Nova Scotia's seafaring ambassador. The *Bluenose*'s location varies from year to year, and it schedules visits to ports in Canada and the United States. In midsummer, it typically alternates between Lunenburg and Halifax, during which time visitors can sign up for 2-hour harbor sailings (C$40 adults, C$25 children age 3 to 12). To hear about the ship's schedule, call the ***Bluenose II* Preservation Trust** (✆ **866/579-4909** ext. 234 or 902/634-4794 ext. 234). Find each summer's sailing schedule online at **http://museum.gov.ns.ca/bluenose**.

which had a newer wing added in 1945; the biggest, and costliest, room is the big Bridal Suite with its four-poster bed, Jacuzzi tub, turret sitting nook, and (the kicker) harbor view. Three more spacious suites are located in the 1905 MacLachlan House, just below the main house and across Lincoln Street—it's the building with the little octagonal tower. Note that guests on the third floor need to navigate some pretty steep steps to get to their rooms (book a different floor if you have mobility concerns), and that the inn no longer serves dinner.

150 Cumberland St. (P.O. Box 489), Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0. ✆ **800/354-5009.** w www.boscawen.ca. 20 units. C$99–C$195 double, C$155–C$225 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. Pets in MacLachlan House only (C$25 fee). AE, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (1 unit), no phone (except by request).

Kaulbach House ★★ Under new ownership by a pair of Brits since 2007, this is one of very few local inns to have upscaled with the times. I mean, the place actually has flatscreen TVs and Wi-Fi. But it also has history: The house is decorated elaborately, as befits its architecture. Rooms are furnished in simple Victorian style, rendered somewhat less oppressive by welcoming, un-Victorian color schemes (one room is even ruby red). The biggest and best room (the Bluenose Suite) is on the top floor; it features two sitting areas and a great view; the former servants' quarters, on street level, are smaller. The owners have also spruced up the rooms a good bit with great shower heads, fresh flowers, fluffy robes, CD player clock-radios, and DVD players. The included three-course breakfast is also worth coming for, and the parlor/living room feels as Victorian as they come. And it's a good choice in one more regard: It's one of the few small Lunenburg inns in which all guest rooms have their own private bathrooms.

75 Pelham St. (P.O. Box 1348), Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0. ✆ **800/568-8818** or 902/634-8818. www.kaulbachhouse.com. 6 units. C$99–C$169 double. Off-season discounts available. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. Closed Nov–May. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, no phone.

Lennox Inn B ed & Br eakfast★ In 1991, this handsome but simple house in a quiet residential area of Lunenburg was condemned and slated for demolition. Robert Cram didn't want to see it go, so he bought it and spent several years restoring it to its original 1791 appearance, filling it with antiques and period reproduction furniture. It's also painted deep red. Things are more rustic than opulent here (the wood-floored rooms are pretty spare), but the Lennox should be first on your list in Lunenburg if you're into a period feel and historic homes. In fact, the inn claims, quite plausibly, to be the oldest unchanged inn in all of Canada (it was once a tavern back in the day). Three of the four spacious second-floor rooms here still have their original plaster, and all four have their original fireplaces (though they don't any longer work) and period prints. The rooms also have skinny four-poster beds and French wingback chairs (you half expect Betsy Ross to appear around a corner); my favorite of the four is probably the Fox Room, on the southwest corner—it has its own bathroom, one of two units that do. Amazingly, the owner has gone ahead and added Wi-Fi access recently. A country breakfast is served in the former drinking room; be sure to note the ingenious old bar.

69 Fox St. (P.O. Box 254), Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0. ✆ **888/379-7605** or 902/521-0214. www.lennoxinn.com. 4 units, 2 with shared bathroom. C$95–C$120 double. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. Open year-round; by reservation only mid-Oct to Apr. *In room:* No phone.

Lunenburg Arms Hotel & Spa ★★ In a town where nearly all the lodgings consist of former seamen's homes, this hotel converted from a gutted former tavern- boarding-house stands out as a modern and welcome alternative. It's what passes for a boutique hotel in these parts, offering an updated look, rooms that are wheelchair-accessible, an elevator, and wiring for high-speed Internet access—amenities you don't often find in small-town Nova Scotia. Rooms are furnished in pleasant carpeting, and the queen and king beds wouldn't look out of place in a New York hotel. Yet there are also thoughtfully homey touches such as wood-laminate floors and a stuffed teddy bear (or two) placed in each room. (Pets are welcomed with open paws, as well.) The smallish bathrooms feature pedestal sinks and all-new fixtures. No two rooms are laid out exactly alike, so examine a couple if possible to get the configuration you want—some rooms have Jacuzzis, some feature knockout harbor views, and there are two bi-level loft suites with the beds up small sets of stairs. The Arms also added a spa featuring Aveda products in 2006; its

facilities include a soaker tub, a hot tub, and aromatherapy-delivering steam showers. The hotel restaurant, **Tin Fish** (see below), is very good.

94 Pelham St., Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0. ✆ **800/679-4950** or 902/640-4040. Fax 902/640-4041. www.lunenburgarms.com. 26 units. Peak season C$129–C$199 double, C$199-C$269 suite; off-peak C$89–C$169 double and suite. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Dining room; conference room; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Where to Dine

As with Lunenburg's inns, many prominent restaurants in town always seem to be up for sale at any given moment. Check ahead to ensure your chosen eatery is open.

Historic Grounds Coffee House ★ Value CAFE Jeff and Teri Green's youthful coffeehouse in the heart of formerly unhip Lunenburg serves up more than just great coffee. They also do hearty breakfasts, chowders, sandwiches, salads, and fish cakes throughout most of the day, and always with a smile. They've been doing this since the mid-1990s, so this isn't one of those flash-in-the-pan designer java huts. Wash your meal down with real Italian espresso or—especially in summer—an addictive coffee drink they call a frappé (not an American-style frappe, but instead more like a frozen espresso). Ice cream and interesting dessert items are also available, as are sodas and smoothies. Get a table on the small balcony if you can snag one—they've got one of the best dining views in town, at a fraction of the cost you'd pay for a meal anywhere else. Good choices during the lunch hour include the Caesar salad wrap, the turkey club, and even a lobster sandwich.

100 Montague St. ✆ **902/634-9995.** Lunch items C$3.95–C$8.95. AE, DISC, MC, V. June to mid-Sept Mon–Fri 7:30am–10pm, Sat–Sun 8am–10pm; mid-Sept to May daily 7:30am–6pm.

The Knot ★ Value PUB FARE Good beers on tap and a convivial English atmosphere make this pub a great place to take a break from more upscale eateries in town. Located smack in the center of a tiny commercial district, it serves surprisingly tasty pub fare—think juicy burgers, fried fish, local sausage, and a warming mussel soup—plus a selection of bitters and ales, including one specially brewed in Halifax by the folks at Propeller Brewery for the Knot. The crowd here is an agreeable, never-too-fancy mixture of fishermen, local families, and tourists, and bar staff are all too happy to help you decide what's good that day. Sign of the times: The bar now has a Facebook page.

4 Dufferin St. ✆ **902/634-3334.** Meals C$6–C$10. AE, MC, V. Daily 10am–midnight; kitchen closes 9pm in summer, 8:30pm in winter.

Old Fish Factory Restaurant ★ SEAFOOD I'm tempted to call this the "Ole Factory," since the fish on the docks don't always smell sweet. But in fact this place's aroma won't offend you. The large and popular restaurant is housed—as you'd guess—in a huge old fish-processing plant (which it shares with a good fisheries museum; see "Exploring Lunenburg," earlier). The place sometimes seems to swallow whole bus tours at once, Jonah-like, so come early and angle for a window seat or a spot on the patio. The specialty here is seafood (no shocker there), which tends to involve platters of fish prepared variously. At lunch you can order fish cakes, a fish sandwich, or a Cape Sable salmon filet, but at dinnertime the options widen: Lobster is served at least four different ways, and chefs whip up bouillabaisse, snow crab, local haddock, scallops in a honey butter—even offbeat choices like curried mango seafood pasta or baked halibut sided with strawberry salsa. (There's also steak, lamb, pork chops, and chicken for more

terrestrial tasters.) Or just grab a cold one at the Ice House bar. Touristy? Yes. Good food? Actually, yes.

68 Bluenose Dr. (at the Fisheries Museum). ✆ **800/533-9336** or 902/634-3333. www.oldfishfactory.com. Reservations recommended. Lunch C$9–C$18; dinner C$17–C$29. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Daily 11am–9pm. Closed late Oct to early May.

Tin Fish ★ CANADIAN A new addition to Lunenburg's restaurant menu, Tin Fish is the house restaurant of the Lunenburg Arms (see "Where to Stay," above). It mostly features straight-ahead Canadian food, but done classier than the fried grub that predominates elsewhere around town. Start with scallops on the half-shell in Bechamel sauce, crab cakes, mussels, or a tomato tart, then move on to entrees like local haddock peppered and fried in a panko crust, rack of lamb, planked salmon, barbecued striploin, breast of duck, or a maple-curry pasta. Even the vegetarian entrée, a grilled phyllo wrap filled with goat cheese, slivered almonds, and grilled veggies, is good. Eat inside by the fireplace, at the bar, or out on the stylish terrace opening onto a quiet street.

94 Pelham St. ✆ **800/679-4950** or 902/640-4040. Reservations accepted. Lunch C$10–C$15; dinner C$18–C$28. AE, MC, V. Daily 7am–10pm.

MAHONE BAY ★★

The village of Mahone Bay, settled in 1754 by European Protestants, is picture-perfect Nova Scotia at its best. It's tidy and trim, with an eclectic Main Street that snakes along the lovely eponymous bay and is lined with inviting shops, markets, and eateries. Locals are friendly and knowledgeable. The winds attract plenty of sailboats to the bay. And the town's **three churches,** grouped closely together, are among the most famous in the province—expect churcharazzi politely clicking away. This is a town that's remarkably well cared for by its 900 of so full-time residents, a growing number of whom live here and commute to Halifax (about an hour away). Architecture buffs will find a range of styles to keep them ogling, too.

One of the best **visitor information centers** (✆ **888/624-6151** or 902/624-6151; www.mahonebay.com) in Nova Scotia is located at 165 Edgewater St., near the three church steeples. It's open daily in summer from around 9am until 7:30pm, only until 5:30pm in the shoulder seasons.

Each year in early August, Mahone Bay celebrates the **Classic Boat Festival** ★, where you can see some of the most beautiful crafts on the eastern seaboard go through their paces for appreciative crowds—though "crowd" is a relative term. Entertainment and workshops are also offered; admission is free.

There's also an annual summer series of **classical music and vocal performances** filling the three churches; the shows cost C$15 each, free for kids under 12. Call ✆ **902/531-2248** for information or to pre-order tickets.

Exploring the Town

The free **Mahone Bay Settlers Museum,** 578 Main St. (✆ **902/624-6263**), provides a historic context for your explorations. From June through early September, it's open Monday to Saturday 10am to 5pm and Sundays 1 to 5pm. After Labour Day, they sometimes open on request; call if you want to have a look. A good selection of historic decorative arts is on display here. Before leaving, be sure to request a copy of "Three Walking Tours of Mahone Bay," a handy brochure that outlines easy historic walks around the compact downtown.

Thanks to the looping waterside routes nearby, this is a popular destination for bikers. And the deep, protected harbor offers superb sea kayaking. If you'd like to give kayaking a go, contact **East Coast Outfitters** (✆ **877/852-2567** or 902/852-2567), based in the Peggy's Cove area near Halifax. They offer half-day introductory classes and a 5-day coastal tour of the area. Among the more popular adventures is the day-long introductory tour, in which paddlers explore the complex shoreline and learn about kayaking in the process. The price is about C$115 per person, C$35 extra for an optional lobster lunch. Rentals are also available, starting at about C$50 per half-day for a single kayak. (You can also rent for just an hour or two, but what fun is that?)

Shopping

Mahone Bay serves as a magnet for all manner of creative types, and Main Street has now become a mini-shopping mecca for those who enjoy buying handmade goods. Shops here are typically open from late spring until Christmas, when Halifax residents often travel down here for some offbeat holiday shopping. Among the more interesting options are these:

Amos Pewter Watch pewter come fresh out of the molds at this spacious workshop and gallery located in an 1888 building. You can get anything from tie tacks and earrings to candle holders and vases here; the Christmas tree ornament is a popular souvenir. 589 Main St. ✆ **800/565-3369** or 902/624-9547.

Jo-Ann's Deli Market & Bake Shop ★ Gourmet and farm-fresh basic fare are sold at this wonderful food shop, where a bag of carrots serves as a counterweight on the screen door. It's the best place for miles around to stock up on local and organic produce; fresh sandwiches; and knockout cookies, sweets, and Cape Breton–influenced oat cakes—the chocolate-covered ones blend chocolate, sugar, salt, and oats to perfect effect. If you're in the mood for a picnic, this is your destination. The homemade jams, sold to benefit a local museum, are well priced, and the coffee drinks from the bar are all exceptionally good as well. Each fall, an amazing array of carved pumpkins greets the weary traveler. 9 Edgewater St. ✆ **902/624-6305.**

Suttles & Seawinds Vibrant and distinctive clothing designed and made in Nova Scotia is sold at this stylish boutique. (There are other branches stretching from Halifax to Toronto, but this is the original.) The adjacent shop is crammed with quilts and resplendent bolts of fabric. 466 Main St. ✆ **902/624-8375.**

Where to Stay

You'll find a clutch of bed-and-breakfast choices along Mahone Bay's Main Street, and also on the roads leading to surrounding coves; consult the **Chamber of Commerce** website (www.mahonebay.com) for a fairly complete listing.

Right in the center of town, the lovely **Mahone Bay Bed & Breakfast** at 558 Main St. (✆ **866/239-6252** or 902/624-6388) is a Victorian option with four rooms at rates from C$95 to C$135 per night. This restored, bright yellow house was built in the 1860s by one of the town's many former shipbuilders; expect plenty of wicker, a widow's walk, and some rather arresting curvature on the front detail of the home. A sitting room upstairs contains cards, games, books, and a TV with DVD player.

There's also **Fisherman's Daughter Bed & Breakfast,** 97 Edgewater St. (✆ **902/624-0483**), with its maritime theme and four rooms costing C$100 to C$125 per night each. The rooms are predictably decked out with a little floral frippery (and claw-foot tubs), but they also have excellent views of the town and bay and cable televisions.

Amber Rose Inn ★★ There are only three units in this family-owned Main Street inn carved out of a blue heritage home built in 1875. But all three are good-sized suites with whirlpools, all are air-conditioned, and all have Wi-Fi access. The affordable rates make this place a steal. Rooms are sparely furnished (in a good way), rose-themed, and floral-printed; they're also accented by plentiful flowers and gardens outside. The side entrance has a lovely little porch with bird feeders, great for reading a magazine and taking in the coastal light. There's also a patio with chairs, and more chairs in the backyard. Morning breakfasts are included and run to strudels, pancakes, quiche, waffles, and eggs Benedict.

319 W. Main St. (Box 450), Mahone Bay, NS B0J 2E0. ✆ **902/624-1060.** Fax 902/624-0363. www.amberroseinn.com. 3 units. C$95–C$135 suite. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. Closed Jan–Apr. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Where to Dine

Mahone Bay's little main street has more than its share of places in which you can nosh, though most of them are priced in "tourodollars": which is to say, higher than they probably should be.

Maybe that's why the seasonally open **Gazebo Cafe ★** at 567 Main St. (✆ **902/624-6484**) still remains my favorite casual eating spot in the town. Affable and affordable, the place dishes up filling, healthy sandwiches and thick bowls of seafood chowder. They also do juices, smoothies, and top-notch coffee. Fresh desserts are delivered several times weekly. This place is becoming the de facto arts headquarters of the town, so check the bulletin board for news about local art shows and musical performances, some of which even occasionally take place right at the cafe. If you're coming in fall, call ahead; every year's schedule is different. They might be closing up shop, or they might be serving lunch straight through until Christmas.

Innlet Café ★★ SEAFOOD/GRILL The Kralicks, the Bavarian owners of the Innlet, are carrying on the place's long tradition as Mahone Bay residents' upscale night out on the town. Everything here is good, though there's perhaps less of an emphasis on seafood now than there used to be, and more steaks, stir-fries, pastas, and the like. (Being German, the Kralicks couldn't resist sticking apple strudel on the dessert menu, either; try it.) The best seats in the house are on the stone patio, with its fine view of the harbor and the famous three steeples. If you end up sitting inside, though, that's okay: The airiness of the interior make it just as inviting. The atmosphere here is informal and relaxed, never stuffy. There's a wine list and cocktails.

249 Edgewater St. ✆ **902/624-6363.** www.innletcafe.com. Reservations recommended for dinner. Most main course items C$12–C$21. MC, V. Daily 11:30am–9pm.

CHESTER ★★

Chester is a short drive off Route 103 and has the feel of a moneyed summer colony somewhere on the New England coast back in the roaring '20s. In any case, the town was first settled in 1759 by immigrants from New England and Great Britain, and today it has a population of about 1,600. The village is noted for its regal homes and quiet streets, along with the numerous islands offshore. The atmosphere here is uncrowded, untrammeled, lazy, and slow—the way life used to be in summer resorts throughout the world. Change may be on the horizon: Canadian actors and authors have apparently discovered the place and are snapping up waterfront homes in town and on the islands as private

 retreats, giving a bit of cultural edge to the lazy feel of the spot. There's not really a public beach here, but the views and boat rides are more than enough to compensate.

The **Chester Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **902/275-4616;** www.chesterns.com) is inside the old train station on Route 3, on the south side of town. It's open daily from 9am to 7pm.

Exploring the Area

Like so many other towns in Nova Scotia, Chester is best seen from your car. But unlike other towns, where the center of gravity seems to be in the commercial district, here the focus is on the graceful, shady residential areas that radiate out from the tiny main street.

In your rambles, plan to head down Queen Street to the waterfront, then veer around on South Street, admiring the views out toward the mouth of the harbor. Continue on South Street past the yacht club, past the statue of the veteran (in a kilt), past the sundial in the small square. Then you'll come to a beautiful view of Back Harbour. At the foot of the small park is a curious municipal saltwater pool, filled at high tide. On warmer days, you'll find what appears to be half the town out splashing and shrieking in the bracing water.

Some creative shops are beginning to find a receptive audience in and around Chester, and there's good browsing for new goods and antiques both downtown and in the outlying areas. One such shop is **Fiasco,** 54 Queen St. (✆ **902/275-2173**), which has an appealing selection of funky and fun home accessories and clothing. Another good stop is the **Village Emporium** at 11 Pleasant St. (✆ **902/275-4773**), an eclectic clustering of folk-arty lavender soaps, simple pottery, knit purses, and the like; it's in the same building as the Kiwi Café (see "Where to Dine," below).

For an even slower pace, plan an excursion out to the **Tancook Islands** ★, a pair of lost-in-time islands with 200 year-round (as opposed to year-old) residents. The islands, accessible via a short ferry ride, are good for walking the lanes and trails. There's a small cafe or two on Big Tancook, but little else to cater to travelers. Several ferry trips are scheduled daily between 6am and around 6pm. The ferry ties up each night on one of the islands, however, so don't count on making a late trip back to the mainland. (But there's also an inn on Big Tancook, if you're inclined to stay over.) Ferry tickets are C$5 round-trip, free for children under 12.

In the evening, the intimate **Chester Playhouse** ★★, 22 Pleasant St. (✆ **800/363-7529** or 902/275-3933; www.chesterplayhouse.ca), hosts plays, concerts, a summer theater festival, and other high-quality events from March through December; it's a town institution, and absolutely a must-visit if you're a theater or folk music buff. Theater festival tickets are usually around C$25 per person for adults, cheaper for children; musical performance ticket prices vary. Call or check the Playhouse's website for a schedule or to purchase tickets.

The local **library** at 63 Regent St. is a great place to check out local history, too. It was a gift from a New Yorker in memorial of her sister, Zoé Vallé Lightfoot (related to Josiah Bartlett, who signed the U.S. Declaration of Independence).

Where to Stay

Graves Island Provincial Park ★★ Kids This 50-hectare (124-acre) estatelike park is one of the province's more elegant-looking campgrounds, as befits moneyed Chester. The park has expanded to 80-odd sites, many of them dotting a high grassy bluff with outstanding views out to the spruce-clad islands of Mahone Bay; camping is

available from mid-May through to the end of the first week of September. There's also a boat launch, swimming area, and playground for the kids.

Route 3 (3km/1¾ miles north of the village on East River). ✆ **902/275-4425.** 84 sites. C$23 per site.

Mecklenburgh Inn ★★ This appealing, brightly painted inn, built around 1900, is located on a low hill in one of Chester's residential neighborhoods. Rather than being prepossessing, the building has a fun, lived-in feel (motto: "The door is always open"), dominated by two broad porches on the first and second floors which invariably are populated with guests rocking on Adirondack chairs and watching the town wander by below. (They wander here because they have to: The town post office is just next door.) This place has been ticking along with a casual bonhomie since the late 1980s, though Wi-Fi access has been added and all rooms finally have private bathrooms (three of the four with claw-foot tubs, one with a shower only). Rooms are modern Victorian and generally quite bright, with pine flooring whose beauty has been newly restored. Other touches include recently upgraded amenities such as French truffles, Frette linens, bathrobes, and pillow-topped mattresses. Yet it's still a relative bargain for the price, considering how nice the touches are.

78 Queen St., Chester, NS B0J 1J0. ✆ **866/838-4638** or 902/275-4638. www.mecklenburghinn.ca. 4 units. C$95–C$155 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, V. Closed Jan–Apr. *In room:* Hair dryer, no phone.

Where to Dine

In addition to the eateries listed below, there's **The Rope Loft,** at 36 Water St. (✆ **902/275-3430**), one of the town's chief gathering spots for locals. The kitchen serves the expected pastas, pizza, fried clams, Digby scallops, lobster, and other seafood by the water; ask for a deck chair, if you can get one. The restaurant also serves brunch on weekends. They have a kids' menu, too. It's open seasonally.

If it's baked goods you want, **Julien's Pastry Shop** (✆ **902/275-2324**) at 43 Queen St. does them extremely well, as does the Kiwi Café (see below).

Kiwi Café ★★ Finds CAFE A little enclave of New Zealand culture on the nautical coast of Nova Scotia? Yes, indeed. The former Luigi's bookshop-cafe right in the heart of downtown Chester was sold in 2004 and reinvented as the Kiwi, a thank-goodness-it's-still-fun place in what can be an occasionally starchy town. Proprietress Lynda Flynn—yes, she's really from New Zealand, and received training in the culinary arts in Auckland—serves up eggs and bagels (try the lobster scramble) for breakfast, plus an assortment of sandwiches, wraps, panini, fresh soups, Nova Scotian fish cakes with mango salsa, and gourmet salads for lunch. Wash it down with wine, Nova Scotia beer, or a good blended Halifax-roasted-coffee drink. On the go? No problem: Grab a "Dinner in a Box" (Flynn also runs a catering business) or some New Zealand honey from the little provisions shop on the premises. And don't forget a piece of hummingbird cake. A great little find, full of good cheer.

19 Pleasant St. ✆ **902/275-1492.** www.kiwicafechester.com. Main courses C$4.50–C$8.50. V. Daily 8:30am–4pm.

La Vista ★★ CONTINENTAL/SEAFOOD This dining room, located inside the Oak Island Resort spa and convention center just north of Chester down a side peninsula, offers an upscale alternative to traveling diners in the Chester area. And the views out those windows—well, just be there at sunset on a clear day. That's all I can say. Start

off with a bowl of seafood chowder flavored heavily with dill, some French onion soup with Gruyère, a smoked-salmon Napoleon, Thai crab cakes, or a plate of local mussels steamed in white wine; then move on to a piece of sesame-crusted salmon over basmati rice, cedar-planked salmon with maple butter, pan-roasted halibut with pepper and lemongrass, roasted tenderloin with a Stilton crust, shrimp-and-lobster pasta, or whatever else has been invented for the season. The signature, decadent "Cordon Oak Island" stuffs a chicken with apple-wood smoked cheddar and Black Forest ham, but then tops it with (what else?) maple cream.

36 Treasure Dr. (inside the Oak Island Resor t), Western Shore. ✆ **800/565-5075** or 902/627-2600. M ain courses C$18–C$23. MC, V. Daily 7am–2pm and 5–9pm. Take Hwy. 103 to exit 9, continue 2km (1¼ miles) to Rte 3, turn onto Rte 3, continue 5km (3 miles) to resort.

8 HALIFAX ★★

Harborside Halifax is the biggest city in the Maritime Provinces by far, yet it doesn't *feel* big at all—in just the way that Boston and San Francisco don't feel like huge cities. It actually feels like a collection of loosely connected neighborhoods, which is in fact what it is; you often forget this is one of the central economic engines of eastern Canada.

Established in 1749, the city was named for George Montagu Dunk, second earl of Halifax. (Residents agree it was a huge stroke of luck that the city avoided being named Dunk, Nova Scotia.) The city plodded along as a colonial backwater for the better part of a century, superceded by nearby towns building more boats (Shelburne and Lunenberg, to name two); one historian even wrote of Halifax as "a rather degenerate little seaport town."

But the city's natural advantages—that well-protected harbor, its location near major fishing grounds and shipping lanes—eventually caused Halifax to overtake its rivals and emerge as an industrial port and military base for the ages. Relatively speaking, of course. And then, at long last, so came the tourists and scholars and urban escapees from Toronto: In recent decades, this city has grown aggressively (it annexed several adjacent suburbs in 1969) and carved out a niche for itself as the commercial and financial hub of the Maritimes.

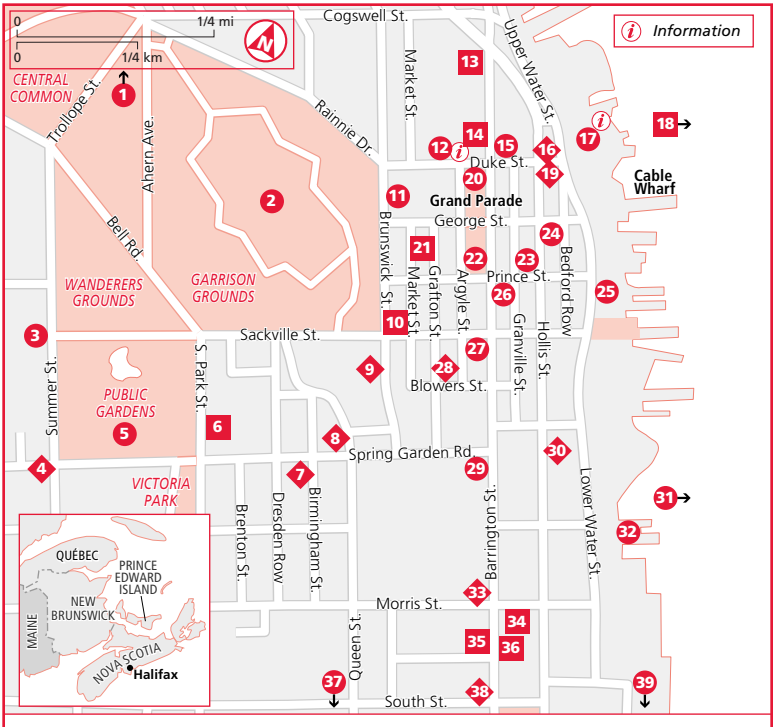
Today it's also the cultural cutting edge of eastern Canada, for what that's worth. Pop singer Sarah MacLachlan grew up here, and it's also the hometown of professional hockey's "next Gretzky," young Sidney Crosby of the Pittsburgh Penguins—and that's a big deal in hockey-crazed Canada. (Crosby's 2009 victory parade with the Stanley Cup snarled downtown's streets, but nobody complained.) So long as you're not allergic to beer, good food, ocean breezes, and good music, I think it's fair to say you'll never be at a loss for something to do during your time here.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Coming from New Brunswick and the west, the most direct route to Halifax by car is via Route 102 from Truro; allow 2 or 2½ hours to drive here once you cross the invisible provincial border at Amherst. From the ferry docks at Yarmouth, it's a 3½-hour drive up the coast . . . if you don't stop and linger anywhere. Which you will.

Many travelers arrive in Halifax by air. Halifax's **Stanfield International Airport** (airport code YHZ) is 34km (21 miles) north of the city center in Elmsdale; to get there,

Halifax



ACCOMMODATIONS
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Scotia Square **12**

take Route 102 to exit 6. Airlines serving Halifax currently include Air Canada (and its commuter airline Jazz), WestJet, American Eagle, CanJet, Provincial, Continental Express, Delta, and Icelandair (see "Fast Facts," p. 332). Nova Scotia's notorious fogs mean it's always a good idea to call your airlines before heading out to the airport to make sure your flight will depart on time.

For transportation to and from the airport, you can either take a cab (a flat fare of C$53 by law); rent a car (plenty of big-name chain options in the terminal); or take the **Airporter** (✆ **902/873-2091**) shuttle bus, which makes frequent runs from the airport to major downtown hotels daily from 6:30am to 11:15pm. The rate is C$21 per person one-way. There are also a surprising number of **long-haul shuttles** ★ from the airport directly to Cape Breton, Yarmouth, Moncton, Antigonish, and even PEI. Some of these shuttle services require advance reservations, because they only run once per day and the vans may be full up on any given day. Check the airport's website (www.flyhalifax.com), or call the airport (✆ **902/873-4422**) for an updated list of these shuttle services.

There's also a province-run **Visitor Information Centre** (VIC) located in the domestic arrivals area of the main terminal of the airport (✆ **902/873-1223**), open year-round from 9am until 9pm.

You can even arrive by train. **VIA Rail** (✆ **888/842-7245**) offers train service 6 days a week between Halifax and Montréal. The entire trip takes between 18 and 21 hours, depending on direction. Stops include Moncton and Campbellton (with bus connections to Québec). Halifax's train station, at Barrington and Cornwallis streets, is within walking distance of downtown attractions.

VISITOR INFORMATION There's a ton of tourist info here. The city's **tourist information booth** (✆ **902/490-5963**) in **Scotia Square** (two blocks below The Citadel) and the government-run **visitor information center** (VIC) (✆ **902/424-4248**) on the waterfront at 1655 Lower Water St. (Sackville Landing) are both open daily, year-round until 9pm in summer, until 4:30pm and 6pm, respectively, in winter. Each is staffed with friendly folks who will point you in the right direction or help you make room reservations in a pinch.

There's **another provincial VIC** at Halifax's **airport** (see "Getting There," above), also open year-round, while a helpfully central *fourth* **seasonal VIC** opens downtown at 1598 Argyle St. (corner of Sackville) from mid-May through mid-October only. As if that weren't enough, tourism office staff cruise the waterfront and boardwalk on Segway scooters during the summer months. For online information about the city, visit **www.halifaxinfo.com**.

GETTING AROUND Parking in Halifax can be problematic. Long-term metered spaces are in high demand downtown, and many of the parking lots and garages fill up fast. If you're headed downtown for a brief visit, you can usually find a 2-hour meter. But if you're looking to spend the day in town, I'd suggest venturing out early and snagging a spot in an affordable parking lot or garage. There's plentiful parking near Sackville Landing, or try along Lower Water Street (south of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic), where you can sometimes park all day for around C$6.

Metro Transit operates buses throughout the city. Route and timetable information is available at the information centers or by phone (✆ **902/490-4000**). Bus fare is C$2.25 for adults, C$1.50 for seniors and children.

Daily throughout the summer (early July through late October), a bright green bus named **FRED** cruises a loop through the downtown, passing each stop about every 30

minutes from 10:30am until 5pm. It's free. Stops include the Maritime Museum, Water Street, the Grand Parade, the Citadel, and Barrington Place. Request a schedule and map at the visitor center. FRED, by the way, stands for Free Rides Everywhere Downtown. But it's still a cool name.

EVENTS The annual **Royal Nova Scotia International Tattoo** (✆ **902/420-1114;** www.nstattoo.ca) features military and marching bands totaling some 2,000-plus military and civilian performers. The rousing event takes place over the course of a week in early July and is held indoors at the Halifax Metro Center. Tickets are C$31 to C$62 per adult, depending on the position of your seating, less for seniors and children.

The annual **Atlantic Jazz Festival** (✆ **902/492-2225**; www.jazzeast.com) has performances ranging from global and avant-garde to local and traditional music each July. Venues include area nightclubs and outdoor stages, and prices vary considerably; consult the website for the latest details and specifics of performance and price.

In early August, expect to see a profusion of street performers ranging from folk singers and fire-eaters to clowns and jugglers. They descend on Halifax each summer for the 10-day **Halifax International Busker Festival** (www.buskers.ca). Performances take place along the waterfront walkway all day long and are often quite remarkable. The festival is free, though donations are requested—you can donate *and* get complete info by buying a comprehensive festival guide for just C$2 on the waterfront before and during the festival. Any hotel reception desk in town worth its salt should also be able to give you updated info on what's happening where.

The **Atlantic Film Festival** ★★★ (✆ **902/422-6965** or 422-3456; www.atlanticfilm.com) offers screenings of more than 150 films at theaters around Halifax over a 10-day period in mid-September. The focus is largely on Canadian filmmaking, with an emphasis on independent productions and shorts, and the quality level is high. (The 2009 offerings included *We Are Wizards,* Josh Koury's documentary on the Harry Potter phenomenon, and *Real Time,* with Randy Quaid as a humane hit man). Panel discussions with industry players are also part of the festival, meaning you get a chance to see mid-level directors and stars up close and personal. Some films are free, while others cost C$5 to C$15 each to view.

In early August, a great new outdoor event showcases more than 140 different beers and ciders from the U.S. and Canada, including a bunch from Maine. I'm talking about the **Halifax Seaport Beerfest** ★ (✆ **902/453-5343;** www.seaportbeerfest.com). It takes place at the Seaport Harbourwalk, at Terminal and Marginal streets, in two 3-hour sessions. If you're crazy for microbrews, and always wondered what a Muskoka Cream Ale or a Galt Knife Old Style tastes like, this is your chance; keep me away, because I would go nuts here. There's also food and live music, of course. Tickets cost C$35 to C$40 per person, and they get you a program plus a 4-oz. glass with which you can sample all the wonderful beers surrounding you. Bring a picture ID.

Finally, the annual mid-October **Nocturne** (✆ **902/233-0003**) is a fun, free art museum-and-gallery walk that kicks off at 6pm and concludes around midnight, highlighting what's fresh on the local art scene. Free shuttle buses ease the load on your feet, too. Only drawback? It only lasts 1 night.

EXPLORING HALIFAX

Halifax is fairly compact, thus easily reconnoitered on foot or by using the excellent public transportation in town. The major landmark is the **Citadel**—that stone fortress looming over downtown from a grassy height. (From the ramparts, you can look into the

windows of the 10th floor of downtown skyscrapers.) The Citadel is only 9 blocks uphill from the **waterfront**—9 *steep* blocks—and the entire downtown's so small that you can easily see both the downtown sights and the waterfront in a single day, if that's all you have.

Another lively neighborhood worth seeking out runs along **Spring Garden Road** between the Public Gardens and the library (at Grafton St.). Here you'll find intriguing boutiques, bars, and restaurants along these 6 blocks, set amid a Bohemian street scene. If you have strong legs, start on the waterfront and walk uphill and over the Citadel, descend to the lovely **Public Gardens** (see later), then return via Spring Garden Road to your downtown hotel, enjoying a drink and a bite along the way.

The Waterfront

Halifax's rehabilitated waterfront is most inviting between Sackville Landing (at the foot of Sackville St.) and the Casino Nova Scotia (near Purdy Wharf). Don't venture much farther north than that—the waterside path becomes a gauntlet of tall drab office towers and their big unpleasant vents. On sunny summer afternoons, this good stretch of waterfront bustles with tourists enjoying the harbor, business folks sneaking ice-cream cones, skateboarders trying to make (or stay out of) trouble. Plan on about 2 to 3 hours to tour and gawk this section from end to end.

Sackville Landing is a good place to start a waterfront walking tour. In addition to the attractions listed below, the waterfront walkway is also studded with other small diversions, intriguing shops, takeout food emporia, and minor monuments. Think of it as an alfresco scavenger hunt.

How to throw together an itinerary? Try this: If you're interested in fish or history, make your first stop the waterfront's crown jewel, the **Maritime Museum of the Atlantic** (see below). Then look for **Summit Place,** commemorating a historic gathering of world leaders in 1995, when Halifax hosted the G-7 economic summit. Pass North America's oldest operating **naval clock,** which was built in 1767 and chimed at the Halifax Naval Dockyard from 1772 all the way up until 1993.

Then visit the **ferry terminal,** which gets hectic during rush-hour with commuters coming and going to Dartmouth across the harbor—but, outside rush hour, is a cheap and relaxing way to get a quick, sweeping city and harbor view. The passenger-only **ferry** ★ runs every 15 minutes, with a fare of C$2.25 per adult each way, C$1.50 for seniors and children age 5 to 15. It only takes 15 minutes to get to Dartmouth, and 15 minutes to get back.

The waterfront's shopping core is located in and around the 3-block **Historic Properties,** near the Marriott. These buildings of wood and stone are Canada's oldest surviving warehouses, and were once the heart of the city's shipping industry. Today, their historic architecture provides ballast for the somewhat precious boutiques and restaurants they now house instead. Especially appealing is the granite-and-ironstone **Privateers' Warehouse,** which dates from 1813.

If you're feeling like a pub crawl might be in order, the Historic Properties area is also a good place to wander around during the early evening. There's a contagious energy that spills out of the handful of public houses here as workers get off work and tipple pints: You'll find a bustling camaraderie and live music.

Maritime Museum of the A tlantic ★★★ (Kids) All visitors to Nova Scotia with even a passing interest in local history owe themselves a stop at this standout museum, situated on a prime piece of waterfront. The exhibits are involving and well executed, and

you'll be surprised how fast 2 hours can fly. Visitors are greeted by a cool 3m (10-ft.) lighthouse lens from 1906, then proceed through a series of shipbuilding and seagoing displays. Visit the deckhouse of a coastal steamer (ca. 1940) and learn the colorful history of Samuel Cunard, the Nova Scotia native (born in 1787) who founded the Cunard Steam Ship Co. to carry royal mail—but established a travel dynasty instead. Another highlight is the shocking exhibit on the tragic Halifax explosion of 1917, when two warships collided in the harbor not far from this museum, detonating tons of TNT; more than 1,700 people died, and windows were shattered *60 miles* away.

But perhaps the most poignant exhibit here is just a single deck chair from the *Titanic*—a reminder that 150 victims of that disaster are buried here in Halifax, where the rescue efforts were centered. Also memorable are an "Age of Steam" exhibit; Queen Victoria's barge; an interesting "Shipwreck Treasures of Nova Scotia" section with its stories and artifacts from more than a dozen local shipwrecks; and recreations of a ship's chandlery, sail loft, and carpenter's shop. This is a fascinating place for adult and teens to visit, especially on a rainy day.

1675 Lower Water St. ✆ **902/424-7490.** www.maritime.museum.gov.ns.ca. May–Oct admission C$8.75 adults, C$7.75 seniors , C$4.75 childr en 6–17, C$23 family ; Nov–Apr, admission disc ounted about 50%. May–Oct daily 9:30am–5:30pm (to 8pm Tues); Nov–Apr closed Mon and only 1–5pm Sun.

On the Water

A number of boat tours depart from the Halifax waterfront. You can browse the offerings on **Cable Wharf,** near the foot of George Street, where many tour boats are based. On-the-water adventures range from 1-hour harbor tours (about C$18) to half-day deep-sea fishing trips (about C$50). **Murphy's on the Water** (✆ **902/420-1015**) runs the most extensive tour operation, with several boats and a choice of tours ranging from a cocktail sailing cruise to whale-watching and fishing trips to C$15 runs out to historic McNab's Island, which is located near the mouth of the harbor (see below).

The **Harbour Hopper** (✆ **902/490-8687**) amphibious craft, now also owned by Murphy's, crosses both land and sea during a harbor tour that takes about an hour. It costs C$25 for adults, C$24 for seniors, C$15 for children ages 6 to 15, and C$9 for children 5 and under. Families of four can travel for C$71 (and these rates haven't changed in several years). The ticket office is located on the north side of the Maritime Museum.

CSS *Acadia* This unusually handsome 1913 steam-powered vessel is part of the Maritime Museum (their "largest artifact"). The *Acadia* was used by the Canadian government to chart the ocean bottom for 56 years until its retirement in 1969. Much of the ship is now open for self-guided tours, including the captain's quarters, upper decks, wheelhouse, and oak-paneled chart room. If you want to see more of the ship, ask about guided half-hour tours (they take place four times daily), which offer access to the engine room and more. Allow a half-hour to an hour to take it in.

1675 Lower Water St. (on the water, in front of Maritime Museum). ✆ **902/424-7490.** Admission C$2 per person or free with Maritime Museum ticket, which c osts C$8.75 adults, C$7.75 seniors, C$4.75 children 6–17, C$23 family. Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm; Sun 1–5:30pm.

HMCS *Sackville* This blue-and-white corvette (a speedy warship smaller than a destroyer) is tied up along a wood-planked wharf behind a small visitor center. There's a short multimedia presentation to provide some background. The ship is outfitted just as it was in 1944, maintained as a memorial to the Canadians who served in World War II. Plan to spend about a half-hour if you're inclined to visit.

Sackville Landing (summer), HMC dock yard (winter). ✆ **902/429-2132.** Admission C$4 adults, C$2 seniors and students, C$9 family. June–Oct daily 10am–5pm; off-season hours vary.

Pier 21 ★ Kids Between 1928 and 1971 more than one million immigrants arrived in Canada at Pier 21, Canada's version of America's Ellis Island. In 1999, the pier was restored and reopened, filled with engaging interpretive exhibits that vividly evoke the confusion and anxiety of the immigration experience. The pier is divided roughly into three sections: the boarding of the ship amid the cacophony of many languages, the crossing of the Atlantic (a half-hour multimedia show recaptures the voyage in a shiplike theater), and the dispersal of recent arrivals throughout Canada via passenger train. For those seeking more in-depth information (they say one in five Canadians today can trace a link back to Pier 21), there's also a reference library and computer resources. Plan to spend an hour here, but only if you're into immigration history.

1055 Marginal Rd. (on the waterfront behind the Westin Hotel). ✆ **902/425-7770.** www.pier21.ca. C$8.50 adults, C$7.50 seniors, C$5 children 6–16, C$21 family. May–Nov daily 9:30am–5:30pm; Dec–March Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; Apr Mon–Sat 10am–5pm.

The Citadel & Downtown

Downtown Halifax cascades 9 blocks down a hill between the imposing stone Citadel and the city's waterfront. There's no fast-and-ready tour route; don't hesitate to follow your own whims, ducking down quiet sidestreets and into bars or striding along the main roads as you wish. A good spot to regain your bearings periodically is the **Grand Parade,** where military recruits once practiced their drills. It's a lovely piece of urban landscape—a broad terrace carved into a hill, presided over on either end by **St. Paul's** (see below) and Halifax's **City Hall**, a sandstone structure built between 1887 and 1890 and exuberantly adorned with all the usual Victorian architectural trifles: prominent clock tower, dormers, pediments, arched windows, pilasters, Corinthian columns. (Alas, there's not much to see inside.)

If the weather is nice, the Grand Parade is also a prime spot to bring an alfresco lunch and enjoy some people-watching.

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Located in a pair of sandstone (yes, again) buildings between the waterfront and the Grand Parade, Halifax's Art Gallery is arguably the premier gallery in the Maritimes, with a nice focus on local and regional art. Yet you'll also find a selection of other works by Canadian, British, and European artists, too, and well-chosen exhibits of folk and Inuit art. In 1998, the gallery expanded to include the Provincial Building next door, where the entire tiny house of Nova Scotian folk artist Maud Lewis was reassembled and put on display. More good news: The admission price has come down a bit in recent years, and this museum can be comfortably perused in 60 to 90 minutes. Overwhelmed? Sign up for the once-a-day tours. Also consider a lunch break in the attractive Cheapside Café (see "Where to Dine," later).

1723 Hollis St. (at Cheapside). ✆ **902/424-5280.** Admission C$10 adults, C$8 seniors, C$5 students, C$3 children age 6–17, C$20 families. Daily 10am–5pm (Thurs to 9pm). Tours daily at 2:30pm (second tour 7pm Thurs only).

Halifax Citadel National Historic Site ★★ The Citadel is the perfect introduction of Halifax: It provides a good geographic first look at the city, and anchors it in history, as well. Even if a big stone fort weren't here, it would still be worth the uphill trek to this site just for the astounding views—the panoramic sweep across downtown, the city's harbor, and the Atlantic Ocean make for some great sightseeing. And the ascent

to your goal quickly makes it obvious why this spot was chosen for Halifax's most formidable defense: there's simply no sneaking up on the place. Four forts have occupied this same hilltop since Col. Edward Cornwallis was posted to the colony in 1749, but today the Citadel has been restored to look much as it did in 1856, when the fourth and final fort was built out of concern over American expansionist ideas. Yet the fort has never been attacked, perhaps a testament to its effectiveness as a deterrent.

The architecture is basic: Sturdy granite walls topped by grassy embankments form a star. In a sprawling gravel and cobblestone courtyard, you'll find convincingly costumed interpreters in kilts and bearskin hats marching in unison, playing bagpipes, and firing a cannon at noon. The former barracks and other chambers are home to exhibits about life at the fort. If you have questions, just stop a soldier, bagpiper, or washerwoman and ask. Don't expect to be alone—this National Historic Site is the most heavily visited in all of Canada, and it's not hard to see why. On the plus side, you won't need more than 45 minutes or an hour to see everything here, probably, unless you want to linger afterward and snap lots of pics of the tableau below you.

Citadel Hill. ✆ **902/426-5080.** Admission June to mid-Sept C$12 adults, C$10 seniors, C$5.80 children 6–16, C$29 families; May and mid-Sept to Oct C$7.80 adults, C$6.55 seniors, C$3.90 children 6–16, C$20 families; free rest of the year. July–Aug daily 9am–6pm; May–June and Sept–Oct daily 9am–5pm. Nov–Apr, visitor center closed but grounds open. No guides or tours in fall or winter.

Nova Scotia Centre for Craft and Design ★ (Finds) Nova Scotia's provincial government runs this center, recently relocated to very near the VIA Rail station, at the west end of the waterfront. The idea: to encourage and develop crafts- and design-based industries across the province. The Mary E. Black Gallery features constantly changing exhibits of the best that Nova Scotia craftspeople are producing in silver, pewter, ceramic pottery, precious jewelry, fabric, needlepoint—even whalebone. Depending on your interest, you could spend up to an hour here.

1061 Marginal Rd., in Suite 140. ✆ **902/492-2522.** www.craft-design.ns.ca. Free admission. Tues–Fri 9am–5pm; Sat–Sun 11am–4pm.

Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History ★ (Kids) Situated on the far side of the Citadel from downtown, this modern, midsize museum offers a good introduction to the flora and fauna of Nova Scotia. Galleries include geology, botany, mammals, and birds, plus exhibits of archaeology and Mi'kmaq culture. There's a cool butterfly house, filled with the winged wonders from July to September. Also noteworthy are an extensive collection of lifelike ceramic fungus and a colony of honeybees that freely come and go from their indoor acrylic hive through a tube connected to the outdoors. Allow an hour, or more if your kids are really excited by this sort of science.

1747 Summer St. ✆ **902/424-7353.** Admission C$5.75 adults, C$5.25 seniors, C$3.75 children 6–17, C$12–C$17 families; admission free on Wed nights 5–8pm. June to mid-Oct Mon–Sat 9:30am–5:30pm (Wed until 8pm), Sun noon–5:30pm; mid-Oct to May, closed Mon.

Province House ★ Canada's oldest seat of government, the three-story stone Province House has been home to the tiny Nova Scotian legislature since 1819. This exceptional Georgian building is a superb example of the rigorously symmetrical Palladian style. And like a jewel box, its dour stone exterior hides gems of ornamental detailing and artwork inside, especially the fine plasterwork, which is rare in a Canadian building from this era.

A free well-written booklet is available when you enter; it provides helpful background about the building's history and architecture. (Sample legend that may or may not be

true: It's said the headless falcons in several rooms were decapitated by an agitated, free-swinging legislator with a cane who mistook them for eagles during a period of feverish anti-American sentiment in the 1840s.) If the legislature is in session (it's not always), you can obtain a visitor's pass and sit up in the gallery, watching the business of the province unfold. They also offer tours, which you book by calling the information number below. History buffs should allow an hour for this visit.

1726 Hollis St. (near Prince St.). ✆ **902/424-4661.** www.gov.ns.ca/legislature. Free admission. July–Aug Mon–Fri 9am–5pm, Sat–Sun and holidays 10am–4pm; Sept–June Mon–Fri 9am–4pm.

St. Paul's Anglican Church ★★ Forming one end of the Grand Parade, this classically handsome white Georgian building was the first Anglican cathedral established outside of England, and as such is Canada's oldest Protestant place of worship. It was once the figurehead for all church doings in eastern Canada—all the way to Ontario. That makes it pretty significant. (Part of the 1749 church was fabricated in Boston and erected in Halifax with the help of a royal endowment from King George II.) Later, history continued happening here: A piece of flying debris from the great explosion of 1917 (see "Maritime Museum of the Atlantic," p. 106) is lodged in the wall over the doors to the nave. Just a quick visit is enough to get a sense of the place, especially the fine stained-glass windows; take one of the summertime guided tours if you want to see more. But you're also allowed to be amazed by the exterior.

1749 Argyle St. (on the Grand Parade near Barrington St.). ✆ **902/429-2240.** www.stpaulshalifax.org. Mon–Fri 9am–4:30pm; Sun services 8, 9:15, and 11am. Free guided tours June–Aug Mon–Sat; call for scheduling.

Gardens & Open Space

Fairview Lawn Cemetery ★ When the *Titanic* went down on April 15, 1912, nearly 2,000 people died. Ship captains from Halifax were recruited to help retrieve the corpses. (You can learn about this grim mission at the Maritime Museum, described on p. 106.) Some 121 victims, mostly ship crewmembers, were buried at this quiet cemetery located a short drive north of downtown Halifax. Some of the simple graves have names, but many others only bear numbers. Plaques and signs highlight some poignant stories from the tragedy. It's definitely worth an hour or more for *Titanic* fans; others might just spend a few minutes here. (Without a car, though, skip it entirely—too far.) A brochure with driving directions to this and two other *Titanic* cemeteries in the city can be obtained either at the Maritime Museum or the city's visitor information centers.

Chisholm Ave., off Connaught Ave. (about 2½ miles northwest of the Citadel). ✆ **902/490-4883.** Daylight hours year-round.

McNab's Island ★ This island wilderness is located within city limits near the mouth of the busy harbor, yet it's a world apart from downtown Halifax. Once part of the city's military defenses and later the site of a popular amusement park, McNab's hasn't had any permanent residents since 1985. Today you'll find miles of wooded roads and trails to explore, some 200 species of birds, and great views of the city skyline and Point Pleasant. The fort at the island's southern tip dates from 1888—it was manned during both world wars, when all ships visiting Halifax harbor were required to signal the fort. (Those that failed to comply were warned with a shot across the bow.) Bring a picnic (and a ferry schedule) and plan to spend 2 hours or so.

In Halifax Harbor. ✆ **800/326-4563** or 902/465-4563 (ferry service). www.mcnabsisland.com. Admission to island free; ferry from Eastern Passage C$12 round-trip adult, C$10 round-trip senior and children 5–17.

Old Burying Ground Fully restored in 1991, this was the first burial ground in Halifax, and between 1749 and 1844 some 12,000 people were interred here. (Only 1 in 10 graves is marked with a headstone, however.) You'll find examples of 18th- and 19th-century gravestone art—especially winged heads and winged skulls. (No rubbings are allowed, however.) Also exceptional is the Welsford-Parker Monument from 1855, which honors Nova Scotians who fought in the Crimean War. An ornate statue near the grounds' entrance features a lion with a Medusa-like mane. Go at dusk, when the grounds are imbued with a quiet grace, a few hours before sunset. The light slants through the trees and city traffic seems far, far away. Cemetery buffs could spend an hour or more; others can easily drop by for 10 minutes en route to downtown attractions or eateries.

Corner of Spring Garden and Barrington. ✆ **902/429-2240.** Free admission. June–Sept 9am–5pm; guides until late Aug. Closed rest of year.

Point Pleasant Park ★★ Point Pleasant is one of Canada's finer urban parks, and there's no better place for a walk along the water on a balmy day. This 73-hectare (180-acre) park occupies a wooded peninsula today, but for years it actually served as one of the linchpins in the city's military defense. Look carefully and you'll find the ruins of early forts, plus a nicely preserved Martello tower. (Halifax still has a 999-year lease from Great Britain for this park, for which it pays 1 shilling—about US10¢—per year.) You'll also find a lovely gravel carriage road around the point, a small swimming beach, miles of walking trails, and groves of graceful fir trees. The park is located about 2km (1¼ miles) south of the Public Gardens. Take note, though, that no bikes are allowed in here on weekends or holidays; you'll need to use pedi-power.

Point Pleasant Dr. (south end of Halifax; head south on S. Park St. near Public Gardens and continue on Young). Free admission. Daylight hours.

Public Gardens ★★ (Kids) The Public Gardens took seed in 1753, when they were founded as a private venture. The tract was acquired by the Nova Scotia Horticultural Society in 1836, and these gardens assumed their present look around 1875 during the peak of the Victorian era. As such, the garden is one of Canada's Victorian masterpieces, rarer and more evocative than any mansard-roofed mansion. You'll find here wonderful examples of 19th-century trends in outdoor landscaping, from the "naturally" winding walks and ornate fountains to the duck ponds and Victorian band shell. (Stop by the shell at 2pm any summer Sunday to catch a free concert.) There are plenty of leafy trees, lush lawns, cranky ducks who have lost their fear of humans, and little ponds. You'll also usually find everyone from octogenarians to kids feeding pigeons there, and smartly uniformed guards slowly walk the grounds. The overseers have also been commendably stingy with memorial statues, plaques, and other falderol.

Spring Garden Rd. and S. Park St. Free admission. Spring to late fall 8am–dusk.

Boat Tours

Murphy's on the Water (✆ **902/420-1015**) runs daily boats from Cable Wharf in downtown Halifax daily in summer for C$15 and up round-trip; a range of harbor, whale-watching, nature, and sightseeing tours are offered by Captain Gerard Murphy and his family. Or, to see McNab's Island, drive instead to Eastern Passage (south of Dartmouth), park free at Government Wharf, and take the McNab's Island Ferry (✆ **902/465-4563**). For the brief trip, captain Mike Tilley (known locally as "Red Beard") charges C$12 for adults, C$10 for seniors and children, and there's no extra

 charge for bikes or dogs. Captain Tilley will also charter you around the harbor for C$75 per hour.

Shopping

Halifax has a pleasing mix of shops, from mainstream retailers to offbeat boutiques. There's no central retail district to speak of; shops are scattered throughout downtown. Two indoor malls are located near the Grand Parade—**Scotia Square Mall** and **Barrington Place Shops,** flanking Barrington Street near the intersection of Duke Street. Another downtown mall, the 85-shop **Park Lane Shopping Centre,** is on Spring Garden Road about 1 block from the Public Gardens.

For souvenir shopping, head to the Historic Properties buildings on the waterfront; for idle browsing, try the shops on and around Spring Garden Road between Brunswick and South Park streets.

Art Gallery of Nova Scotia Shop The museum's gift shops feature limited but choice selections of local crafts, ranging from creative postcards to birdhouses and tabletop sculptures. There's also work by Mi'kmaq artisans. 1723 Hollis St. ✆ **902/424-4203.**

Drala Books & Gifts This shop specializes in Asian imports, including raku-style pottery, incense, calligraphy and ikebama materials, paper screens, chopsticks, teas, teapots, books on design and philosophy, local greeting cards—and some mystical/offbeat stuff, too, like crystal balls, brass gongs, and meditation cushions. Instructors in the store sometimes teach meditation, Japanese tea ceremony, and the like. 1567 Grafton St. ✆ **877/422-2504** or 902/422-2504. www.drala.ca.

Geddes Furniture and Antiques Elegant and formal mahogany reproduction Chippendale and Queen Anne pieces, including dining room chairs and highboys, are the specialty at this shop, which is filled with lovely pieces priced for less than you might expect. You can also order custom-made furniture, and delivery trucks travel to the northeastern United States regularly. 2739 Agricola St. ✆ **866/443-3337** or 902/454-7171.

Janet Doble Pottery Studio Doble's bright and festive earthenware pottery is inspired by European majolica techniques; anything purchased here is certain to brighten any drab kitchen. If you're serious about visiting and buying, note that her studio hours are quirky, as befits a working artist; also, call ahead rather than just showing up. 2641 Fuller Terrace. ✆ **902/455-6960.**

Thornbloom, The Inspired Home This tidy shop in a small indoor mall on Spring Garden features housewares, knives by Henckels, good bed linens, and intriguing tile "memory blocks" by Vancouver-based Sid Dickens. 5640 Spring Garden Rd. ✆ **902/425-8005.**

Urban Cottage This consignment store in the middle of downtown has an eclectic and sizable selection of furniture, housewares, and collectibles, nicely displayed and generally reasonably priced. 1819 Granville St. ✆ **902/423-3010.**

WHERE TO STAY

Expensive

Cambridge Suites Hotel Halifax ★ Kids The attractive, modern Cambridge Suites is nicely located near the foot of the Citadel, well positioned for exploring the city. It's perfect for families—about 40 of the units are two-room suites, bigger spaces featuring kitchenettes with microwaves and extra phones. Expect above-average service and a comfortable, inoffensive decor. They also offer the usual business-hotel amenities such as

a fitness center, free Wi-Fi throughout the property, and a business center. **Dofsky's Grill** on the first floor is open for all three meals, palatable if not thrilling. Look for pasta, blackened haddock, burgers, jerk chicken, and the like.

1583 Brunswick St., Halifax, NS B3J 3P5. ✆ **888/417-8483** or 902/420-0555. Fax 902/420-9379. www.cambridgesuiteshalifax.com. 200 units. C$119–C$299 suite. Children under 18 stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, MC, V. Valet or self-parking C$15. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; concierge; health club; Jacuzzi; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, fridge (some units), hairdryer, kitchenette (some units), minibar.

Delta Barrington ★ Convenience and location are the reasons to consider booking into the Delta Barrington, located just 1 block from both the waterfront and the Grand Parade—and connected to the Metro Centre and much of the rest of downtown by a covered walkway. It's a large modern hotel, yes, but was designed and furnished with an eye more to comfort than flash. Guest rooms are decorated in a contemporary country decor, with pine headboards and country-style reproduction furniture. The king rooms are spacious, furnished with sofas and easy chairs. Some rooms face the pedestrian plaza and have been soundproofed to block out the noise from below, though the downside is that these windows don't open. (Most other rooms in the hotel have windows that do open.) Thus the quietest rooms face the courtyard, but lack a view. The hotel restaurant, the **Stone Street Café,** serves an attractive upscale menu that's mostly constructed of fish and lobster prepared various upscale ways, but you can also order rack of lamb, pappardelle, beef tenderloin, and the like. Also ask about the hotel's affordable "Seafood Festival" dinner specials.

1875 Barrington St., Halifax, NS B3J 3L6. ✆ **877/814-7706** or 902/429-7410. Fax 902/420-6524. www.deltabarrington.com. 200 units. C$134–C$294 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking C$20. Small pets allowed. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; children's programs; concierge; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Delta Halifax ★ The Delta Halifax (formerly the Hotel Halifax, which was formerly the Chateau Halifax) is a slick and modern downtown hotel that offers premium services. It's located just a block off the waterfront, to which it's connected via a skyway, although navigating the skyway involves an annoying labyrinth of parking garages and charmless concrete structures. The lobby is street-side, and guests—largely business travelers during the week—take elevators above a six-floor parking garage to reach their rooms. Ask for a room in the "resort wing" near the pool, which feels farther away from the chatter of downtown and the press of business. A number of rooms have balconies and many have harbor views; ask when you book. Rooms are in two classes—either 300 or 500 square feet—and all are furnished simply and unexceptionably with standard-issue hotel furniture. The **Crown Bistrot** restaurant (run by the same chef as the Delta Barrington's cafe) offers good Continental, Asian, and Maritime-inflected cuisine, while **Sam Slick's Lounge** next door features Friday-night piano and a surprisingly varied bar menu.

1990 Barrington St., Halifax, NS B3J 1P2. ✆ **877/814-7706** or 902/425-6700. Fax 902/425-6214. www.deltahalifax.com. 296 units. C$134–C$284 double. AE, MC, V. Valet parking C$23, self-parking C$20. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; concierge; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; limited room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

The Halliburton ★★ The Halliburton is a well-appointed, well-run, elegant country inn located in the heart of downtown. Named after former resident Sir Brenton Halliburton (Nova Scotia's first chief justice), the inn is spread out among three townhouse-style buildings connected via gardens and sun decks in the rear (though not

internally). The main building was constructed in 1809, but only converted into an inn in 1995; it was somehow modernized without the loss of its considerable charm. All guest rooms here are subtly furnished with fine antiques, yet few are so rare that you'd fret about damaging them. (The rooms also feature iPod-playing clock-radios, flatscreen TVs, and Wi-Fi access.) Things are rich and masculine in tone here, and light on frilly stuff. Among the best units: room no. 113, small but with a lovely working fireplace and unique skylighted bathroom. Room nos. 102 and 109 are suites with wet bars and fireplaces; there's also a studio apartment. Halliburton is popular with business travelers, yet it's also a romantic spot for couples to hide out in. The intimate first-floor dining room **Stories** ★ serves dinner nightly.

5184 M orris St., Halifax, NS B3J 1B3. ✆ **888/512-3344** or 902/420-0658. F ax 902/423-2324. w ww. halliburton.ns.ca. 29 units. C$145–C$350 double; off-season discounts available. Rates include continental breakfast and fr ee parking (limited; first-come, first-serve). AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bab y-sitting; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

The Lord Nelson Hotel & Suites ★ The Lord Nelson was built in 1928, and was for years the city's preeminent lodging. It gradually sank in esteem, however, and somehow eventually ended up as a flophouse. In 1998, the hotel was purchased and got a long-overdue, top-to-bottom renovation. It certainly has location going for it: It's right across from the lovely Public Gardens and abuts lively Spring Garden Road. Rooms are furnished with Georgian reproductions. The business-class Flagship Rooms feature desks, ergonomic office chairs, robes, free local calls, and morning newspapers. The hotel charges a premium for rooms facing the street or gardens, but they're probably worth it; others face into a somewhat bleak courtyard. You can tipple a pint off the lobby at the Victory Arms, a cozy and convincing English-style pub serving British fare like bangers and mash and fish and chips (of course) but also rotating more inventive dishes like Singapore noodles, Kobe beef burgers, nan-based pizzas, and Cajun-spiced codfish sandwiches. This hotel is particularly pet-friendly.

1515 South Park St., Halifax, NS B3J 2L2. ✆ **800/565-2020** or 902/423-6331. F ax 902/491-7148. w ww. lordnelsonhotel.com. 260 units . C$139– C$259 double . AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet park ing C$25, self-parking C$20. P ets allo wed with C$100 deposit. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar ; bab ysitting; c oncierge; health club; limited room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

The Prince George Hotel ★ This contemporary and large downtown hotel features understated styling, polished wainscoting, carpeting, and the discreet use of marble, though it still feels a bit sterile and stuffy. In any case, expect modern and comfortably appointed rooms, most with balconies and all with a selection of complimentary tea and coffee, coffeemakers, and hair dryers. This hotel is nicely situated near the Citadel and restaurants and is linked to much of the rest of downtown via underground passageways; parking is beneath the hotel. The hotel's **Gio restaurant** ★ on the first floor features contemporary bistro styling, with a zippy menu to match: Dinner options have included Kobe burgers, crab club sandwiches, stuffed chicken, Thai noodles, elk (!) tenderloin, grilled tuna, steak frites, and haddock in an almond-butter sauce. If you're in town on a Sunday, an attractive and popular Sunday brunch is served at the hotel's **Terrace** restaurant for C$30 per person—reservations are required.

1725 Market St., Halifax, NS B3J 3N9. ✆ **800/565-1567** or 902/425-1986. Fax 902/429-6048. www.prince georgehotel.com. 206 units. C$149–C$299 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking C$25, self-parking C$20. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bab ysitting; concierge; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; limit ed room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer.

Moderate

Super 8 Dartmouth Yes, I know it's a chain property, but if you have kids and a car, this all-suite hotel right across the harbor from Halifax (a 2-minute walk to the Dartmouth waterfront) is definitely one of the better options for travelers on a beer budget. Housed in a modern concrete building, it used to be the former Maranova Suites; even after the change in flagging, it still features rooms that are large and tidy. Many of the 84 units have separate sitting areas, kitchenettes, balconies, and flatscreen televisions. Don't expect anything super-fancy; these rooms are basic, simple, and clean, but some have wonderful views of the harbor, sometimes for no extra cost—ask about getting a prime view when you book. The hotel is also pet-friendly, has a guest laundry, serves an included continental breakfast, and leaves the health club open 24 hours a day. You reach the hotel by crossing the Angus MacDonald bridge from Halifax's waterfront and quickly exiting onto Windmill Road (east), which becomes Alderney; go left at Queen Street, then left again on King.

65 King St., Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4C2. ✆ **888/561-7666** or 902/463-9520. w ww.super8dartmouth.com. 84 units. C$99–C$350 suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking C$10 in garage, C$8 outside in lot. **Amenities:** Restaurant; fitness center. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some), hair dryer, kitchenette (some).

Waverley Inn ★ The Waverley is adorned in high Victorian style, as befits its 1866 provenance. Flamboyant playwright Oscar Wilde was a guest here in 1882, and perhaps he had a hand in the decorating scheme? There's walnut trim, red upholstered furniture, and portraits of sourpuss Victorians at every turn. Headboards in the guest rooms are especially elaborate—some look like props from Gothic horror movies. Among the rooms, no. 130 has a unique Chinese wedding bed and a Jacuzzi, and it's one of about ten rooms in the inn with private Jacuzzis. Some rooms have canopy beds. The inn now also offers free Wi-Fi access in every room and a free Internet terminal in the lobby.

1266 Barrington St., Halifax, NS B3J 1Y5. ✆ **800/565-9346** or 902/423-9346. Fax 902/425-0167. w ww.waverleyinn.com. 34 units. Mid-May to Oct C$129–C$229 double; Nov to mid-May C$109–C$179 double. Rates include full breakfast, snacks, afternoon tea, and parking. DC, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer (some units), Jacuzzi (some units), no phone (some units).

Inexpensive

The 75-bed **Halifax Heritage House Hostel** (✆ **902/422-3863**) is located at 1253 Barrington St., within walking distance of many downtown attractions including the city farmer's market and a number of convivial bars. You'll usually share rooms with other travelers (several private and family rooms are available, though); there are lockers in each room, shared bathrooms for all, and a shared, fully equipped kitchen. Bring coins for the Internet terminals and the coin-op laundry. Rates at the hostel are C$26 and up per person in dormitories, C$57 and up for a double bed in a private room.

A short distance from downtown, but convenient to bus lines, are the dorm rooms at **Dalhousie University** (✆ **888/271-9222** or 902/494-8840), which rents out a range of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units—furnished with plain single beds each—to the traveling public when school isn't in session (that is, from about mid-May through mid-August). Many of these rooms even have private bathrooms and kitchenettes (you have to rent dishes for a small fee), making them an especially good deal for families on the road. During previous summers, single rooms have begun at about C$40, double rooms around C$60, and apartments somewhat more than that; check with the university about current pricing and options, and remember that summer demand is high. Try to

 book as far in advance as possible. Also note that a 2-night minimum stay is required for some of these units.

WHERE TO DINE

Coffee emporia have cropped up throughout Halifax over the last decade, just as they have in urban areas everywhere. Many also stock sandwiches, pastries, and light snacks in addition to the java. A few of the best downtown options are **Caffé Ristretto** (✆ **902/425-3087**) at 1475 Lower Water St. (Bishop Landing) with its nice harbor views; **Timothy's World Coffee,** which has locations with Wi-Fi on both Barrington and Upper Water streets; **Cabin Coffee** (✆ **902/422-8130**) at 1554 Hollis St. with its Bohemian feel and good espresso and cappuccino; and the dependable Canadian chain **Second Cup,** with Wi-Fi'ed branches on Duke Street and Spring Garden Road, among others.

For chain fast-food meals (if you must), again stick to Spring Garden Road. For a quick snack on the same street, the plastic patio furniture outside belies the good snacks, pastries, coffees, teas, and light meals inside **Annie's Place** (✆ **902/420-0098**) at 1513 Birmingham St. (corner of Spring Garden); look for the big CAFÉ sign. Outstanding bargain lunch specials include a changing menu of offerings such as a slab of grilled meatloaf on focaccia or chicken sandwiches. It opens early, but closes in late afternoon each day. For more upscale fare, explore downtown or some of the tiny side streets that cross Spring Garden.

The Brewery ★★ complex, on the uphill side of Lower Water Street just above the docks, is perhaps the city's most interesting one-stop shopping and dining experience. Originally the site of the Alexander Keith brewery—North America's oldest—the space here was eventually redesigned and renovated to enclose courtyards from the weather, link the various structures of the abandoned brewery, and create a kind of interior market of shops and restaurants. It's working. Today the complex houses the city's finest Italian restaurant (see daMaurizio, below), as well as a range of other drinking, dining, and shopping options. While navigating the labyrinthine courtyards to find a particular establishment can be a bit confusing, it's also great fun to see what pops up around the next corner.

The Saturday morning **farmer's market** ★★ held within the Brewery's walls is a weekly highlight for Haligonians, rain or shine. It's Canada's oldest such market—and possibly its most interesting. The market runs from 7am until just 1pm each Saturday, so go early in the day for the widest selection of donuts, fruits, vegetables, coffee, baked goods, smoked meats, crafts, Greek pastries, wine and chocolate samples, dynamite crepes—and many other items.

Expensive

You don't come to Halifax for a fancy-pants, precious experience, but if you've just got to eat and drink something luxe, check out **Onyx** (✆ **902/428-5680;** www.onyxdining.com) at 5680 Spring Garden Rd. It's the sort of place with a champagne flight, and a C$100-plus tasting menu; supposedly rock stars eat and drink here when they're passing through town.

Several of Halifax's hotels also have very good fine-dining restaurants tucked within them, notably the Prince George Hotel's **Gio** ★ (✆ **902/425-1987;** www.giohalifax.com) at 1725 Market St. which has won raves and culinary awards.

Bish World Cuisine ★★★ Finds FUSION Maurizio strikes again! The culinary wizard behind the popular daMaurizio (see below) in The Brewery market daringly

opened a second high-tone eatery—across the street from his first—and, against the odds in a tough economic moment, it's already supplanting his original fine-dining establishment as the "in" place. Tucked into a harborside location at the back of the upscale Bishop's Landing development, Bish combines Asian and Continental influences to fine effect, much like a hot young chef in Tokyo or L.A. would do. Exhibit A: appetizers of panko-encrusted scallops with ponzu glazes; tuna tartare; jumbo shrimp with green curry, bok choy, and Thai basil; mussels and frites; oyster fritters served with horseradish crème fraîche; Dungeness crab cakes with a lime-chili aioli; and Southern-style barbeque ribs paired with Johnnycakes. Exhibit B: main courses of charred Atlantic salmon with carbonara sauce; miso sea bass with udon; bouillabaisse with garlic baguettes; Nova Scotia lobster over angelhair pasta; sesame-seared tuna; a local version of surf-and-turf (filet mignon and roasted lobster); duck à l'orange; sugarcane- and rum-lacquered pork loin; and a huge Angus rib steak with herbed frites, black and white ketchup (whatever that is), and sauteed wild mushrooms.

Finish with house-made ice creams or sorbets, bananas Foster with Grand Marnier gelato, the famous Bish hot fudge sundae (with homemade peanut brittle and chocolate chantilly cream), a lemon-key lime torte with a citron vodka sorbetto, or perhaps a chocolate sampler—tart, mousse, torte, bonbons—and a liquered coffee drink. The water views, professional service, and fine bar and wine list only enhance the experience of having temporarily traded New Scotland for New York. Dress smartly, expect Halifax's finest to be out in force on the weekends, and reserve early.

1475 Lower Water St. (in Bishop's Landing, entrance at end of Bishop St.). ✆ **902/425-7993.** Reservations highly recommended. Main courses C$28–C$39. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5:30–10pm.

daMaurizio ★★★ ITALIAN Everything daMaurizio touches turns to gold, even though it's no longer owned by its founder. Located inside a cleverly adapted former brewery, its vast space has been divided into a complex of hives with columns and exposed brick that add to the atmosphere and heighten the anticipation of the meal. The decor shuns fancy trimmings for simplicity. Start with an appetizer such as a bowl of San Marzano tomato soup with garlic, a plate of calamari quick-fried with tomato and chiles, a salad with grapefruit and candied walnuts, or some mussels in white wine. The main courses here tax even the most decisive diner: on a given night, *secondi* (pasta dishes) might include gnocchi with garlic and onions, penne with veal, or ravioli stuffed with lobster or mascarpone in a truffle cream sauce. But you're only getting started. The main courses might run to seared fillet of salmon served with mango, cucumber, and lime mostarda; grilled prime rib of pork, finished nicely with apricots, sherry, ginger, honey and chili; handmade ravioli stuffed with braised beef and flavored with truffle oil; veal scaloppine with lobster and cream sauce; veal chops with sage and port wine sauce; a grilled pepper-crusted Angus tenderloin, flambéed with brandy, veal stock, and cream; a grilled rack of lamb served with a cabernet reduction; seared jumbo scallops; or branzino with a citrusy compote. Desserts run beyond the expected tiramisu and gelati to mini lemon mascarpone cheesecakes with ginger crusts; mousses and panna cottas; fruit, nut, and cheese plates; and the "coppa alla Francesca": chocolate and vanilla gelati layered with a brownie and drizzled with dolce di leche, chocolate ganache, and pralines. Everything here is both amazing and innovative.

1479 Lower Water St. (in The Brewery). ✆ **902/423-0859.** Reservations highly recommended. Main courses C$27–C$34; pasta dishes C$10–C$16. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5–10pm.

Moderate

O'Carroll's ★★ SEAFOOD/CONTINENTAL Is O'Carroll's the city's "Most Improved" in the past 5 years? Maybe. A dusky, Gaelic-influenced sort of spot laid out in white tablecloths, potted plants, and stained-glass lamps, it's still a good place for a filling seafood meal. But the kitchen has really changed directions recently, in the process becoming a lot fancier (and better) than the average fish house. Chef Colin Stone now serves inventive entrees in the dining room like seared Kobe beef, braised lamb, and cedar-planked salmon with a whisky-maple glaze. (Yes, they still serve steaks and big seafood medleys.) Lunch is equally classy, with lamb burgers, spring rolls, lobster ravioli, Malaysian shrimp curries—but also ribeye steaks, finnan haddie, Digby scallops, and local steamed lobsters. Even the pub section has gone upscale, eschewing greasy pub grub for smoked-chicken-and-pear salads and lobster bisque. (They do still serve wings and bangers and mash, though.) Sign o' the times: Fish and chips and steak-and-kidney pie don't usually appear on the menu anymore. I like the direction this place is going. There's live music in the pub, and plenty of good beers (including microbrewed, domestic, and imported) on tap, too.

1860 Upper Water St. ✆ **902/423-4405.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$8–C$19 at lunch, C$15–C$22 at dinner, C$10–C$14 in the pub. AE, MC, V. Restaurant daily 11am–2:30pm and 5–11pm; pub daily 11am–11pm; weekend hours may vary.

Ryan Duffy's STEAKHOUSE Located on the upper level of a small shopping mall on Spring Garden, Ryan Duffy's may at first strike you as a knockoff of an American chain such as Friday's or Olive Garden. It's not. The house specialty here is steak, for which the place is justly famous. The beef comes from corn-fed Hereford, Black Angus, and Shorthorn, and is nicely tender. Steaks are grilled over natural wood charcoal to order (no broiling here; Hallelujah), and can be dressed up with garlic, cilantro butter, or other extras as you wish. The more expensive cuts, such as the strip loin, are trimmed right at the table and are so juicy you might not need a knife. They'll even cook it "blue rare" if you want it that way. If you don't feel like steak, though, there's a lot less to get excited about on the menu here—bear that in mind.

5640 Spring Garden Rd. ✆ **902/421-1116.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$9–C$15 at lunch, C$19–C$38 at dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2pm and 5–10pm; Sat–Sun 5–10pm.

Saege Bistro ★★ FUSION Here's an up-and-coming star to watch on the Halifax scene: Geir Simensen's Saege Bistro, a member of the family-owned catering team that handles the Cheapside Café (see below). Think of it as "Scandinavia meets Canada" (with a sprinkling from the rest of the world). Lunches run to Norwegian fish cakes, corn-crusted crab cakes, schnitzel, Asian stir-fries, lobster ravioli with pesto cream, and mussels steamed in Calvados; dinners to boulliabaisse, seared Digby scallops, pork chops, cumin rack of lamb, and salmon with coconut and peach chutney—not to mention plenty of interesting pizzas and pastas. Dessert could be a lemon flan, a gianduja torte, a pistachio mousse with mango sorbet, or a chile-and-chocolate *pot de crème*—yum. Saege also does a nice and extremely affordable Sunday **brunch ★** with items like real muesli, huevos rancheros, and brioche French toast filled with apple chutney. I hope this place has staying power.

5883 Spring Garden Rd. ✆ **902/429-1882.** www.saege.ca. Reservations recommended. Main courses C$9–C$21 at lunch, C$15–C$26 at dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Tues–Fri 11:30am–10pm; Sat–Sat 9:30am–10pm; Sun 9:30am–9pm.

Inexpensive

Morris East ★★ (✆ **902/444-7663;** www.morriseast.com), an excellent thin-crust pizza joint (though it's fancier than "joint" suggests), uses a wood-fired oven; sometimes you can smell the place before you can see it. It's at 5212 Morris St. on the west side, about a block from Henry House (see below).

Cheapside Café ★★ Value Kids CAFE Yes, it's cheap, but that's not the point; the name actually comes from an open market that once occupied this street, named after a similar market in London. This cheerful and lively cafe is tucked inside the Provincial Building, one of two structures housing the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, and it's a fantastic find. Run by the same proprietress as the late, lamented Sweet Basil Bistro, it's my place of choice in downtown Halifax for sandwiches and sweets. The interior is almost like a small museum, with fun artwork on the walls and table settings. The daily card of soups and sandwiches might feature choices like jerked pork tenderloin on rye with an apple-blackberry compote, open-faced shrimp sandwiches with dill mayonnaise, phyllo with chevre and mushrooms, or grilled red pepper and Portobello sandwiches. Other daily fare could include haddock fish cakes, simple pasta dishes, Caesar salads, and a changing crepe of the day. These are all tasty, but desserts really go over the top: Linzer tortes, raspberry mousse tarts, cookies, Florentines, cheesecake slices, and the eponymous Cheapside Café torte with its combination of milk and dark chocolates and pavé of sweet crunchy hazelnut.

1723 Hollis St. (inside the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia). ✆ **902/425-4494.** Sandwiches and entrees C$9–C$12. MC, V. Tues–Sat 10am–5pm (Thurs to 8pm); Sun 11am–2:30pm.

Cheelin ★ CHINESE Possibly Halifax's best Chinese restaurant, Cheelin manages to achieve a seemingly improbable balance between authentic Asian cuisine and a funkier, Haligonian vibe. The Szechuan- and Beijing-influenced kitchen serves normally hard-to-find dishes like *mapo* tofu (spicy tofu, cubed and stir-fried, often mixed with ground pork or beef) and *yu xiang* pork (pork with Szechuan sauce, usually made from some combination of ginger, garlic, sesame, vinegar, or fish flavoring).Yet the brightly painted, pastel interior and the hip young staff and crowd—plus a few hip dishes like scallops with mango sauce—tell you that you're in Halifax. Despite the surprisingly low prices, this is definitely not a hole-in-the-wall Chinese eatery. Go for the spicy Hunan haddock, the excellent vegetable spring rolls, the tofu bao, spicy calamari, orange beef, shredded pork with bitter melon, or maybe a daily special such as peppery shrimp with sautéed bok choy and squash. They also deliver to the downtown area—good to know when you're hungry in your hotel late at night.

1496 Lower Water St. (inside The Brewery). ✆ **902/422-2252.** Most items C$10–C$15. AE, MC, V. Mon 11am–2:30pm; Tues–Sat 11am–2:30pm and 5:30–10pm; Sun 5:30–10pm.

Henry House ★ BREWPUB Eastern Canada's first brewpub is housed in an austere building on the far western reaches of Barrington Street, down near the youth hostel. The starkly handsome 1834 stone building in which it's housed has a medium-fancy dining room upstairs with red tablecloths and captains' chairs, plus a pub downstairs that's more informal (and louder). You can order off the same menu at either spot, and the food's mostly what you'd expect at a brewpub, though better-tasting. Entrees could include beer-battered fish, salmon, steak sandwiches, a smoked-salmon club sandwich, burgers, beef-and-beer stew, fish cakes with beans, or a chicken-and-leek pie. The half-dozen locally brewed beers here are fresh and good, as is the black-and-tan and amber-and-tan.

1222 Barrington St. ✆ **902/423-5660.** www.henryhouse.ca. Main courses C$8–C$15. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–12:30am; Sun noon–11pm.

Il Mercato ★★ ITALIAN Another leg in the daMaurizio Bish empire, this fun bistro features light-colored Tuscan sponged walls and big rustic terra-cotta tiles on the floor, which set an appropriate mood amid the clamor of Spring Garden. I like this place a lot. Come early or else expect to wait (no reservations are accepted). You'll find a great selection of meals at prices that approach bargain level. Start by selecting antipasti from the deli counter in the front (you point; the waitstaff will bring them to your table). The focaccias are superb and come with salad, while the ravioli filled with roast chicken and wild mushrooms is sublime. There are plenty of pastas and thin-crust pizzas on the menu, too, while non-Italian entrees include a grilled rack of lamb with Dijon, veal scallopine, a seafood medley cooked up with peppers, and a strip steak topped with gorgonzola. The desserts, Italian coffees, aperitifs, and cocktails are similarly tasty. Try a toffee crunch, a chocolate tart, a sambuca, a Campari, or an espresso if you like—but save room for the fantastic homemade gelati, too.

5650 Spring Garden Rd. ✆ **902/422-2866.** www.il-mercato.ca. Reservations not accepted. Main courses and pastas C$10–C$20. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–11pm.

Satisfaction Feast ★ VEGETARIAN Located along a newly cool stretch of Grafton Street, Halifax's longest-running vegetarian restaurant (it opened in 1981) has been voted one of the top 10 veggie restaurants in Canada by the prim *Globe and Mail.* Now at a new location on Robie Street, its offerings still run to curries, samosas, quesadillas, veggie burgers, wraps and sandwiches, and other cow-friendly entrees. There's also "neatloaf" for those who like their food with cute names. The vegan fruit crisp is the dessert to hold out for. They also now serve breakfast and brunch—a recent addition—which include free-range eggs, if you vegetarians out there are keeping track. Anyway, consider a picnic atop nearby Citadel Hill: They're happy to bundle up something as takeout for you.

3559 Robie St. ✆ **902/422-3540.** www.satisfaction-feast.com. Main courses C$6–C$12. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–9:30pm (winter to 8:30pm).

Steve-O-Reno's ★ (Value) CAFE Tucked on a quaint side street off Spring Garden Road, this coffee shop is also a popular lunch stop for the locals. You'll have your choice of potent coffee and other beverages (such as chai tea latte), along with inventive fruit smoothies, a small selection of sandwiches and salads, and a pleasantly relaxed atmosphere. They do everything well and inexpensively, and the hip young staff is friendly and cheerful as can be. There's also a second, drive-through location of Steve-O's on Robie Street, open similar hours.

1536 Brunswick St. ✆ **902/429-3034.** Meals C$4–C$6. No credit cards. Mon–Sat 7:30am–6pm; Sun 8am–6pm.

HALIFAX BY NIGHT

For starters, stop by the visitor center or the front desk of your hotel and ask for a copy of *Where Halifax* (www.wherehalifax.com), an excellent and comprehensive monthly guide to the city's entertainment and events.

Among the city's premier venues for shows is the downtown **Halifax Metro Centre,** 1800 Argyle St. (✆ **902/421-8000;** www.metrohalifaxcentre.com), which hosts sporting events (wrestling, pro hockey) as well as concerts by a variety of big-name artists. Note that tickets are sold by the Ticket Atlantic Box Office (✆ **902/451-1221**).

Performing Arts

Shakespeare by the Sea ★ (✆ **902/422-0295**) stages a whole line of bardic and non-bardic productions July through Labor Day at several alfresco venues around the city. Most are held at Point Pleasant Park, where the ruins of old forts and buildings are used as the stage settings for delightful performances, with the audience sprawled on the grass, many enjoying picnic dinners with their *Taming of the Shrew.* Shows are technically free, though the players suggest a donation of C$15. The occasional more elaborate productions at other locations (past shows have included *King Lear* at the Citadel and *Titus Andronicus* at the park's Martello tower) have limited seating, with ticket prices that might range up to C$30.

The Neptune Theatre, 1593 Argyle St. (✆ **902/429-7070;** www.neptunetheatre.com), benefited from a big, multimillion-dollar renovation and now also runs an intimate 200-seat studio theater. Top-notch dramatic productions are offered throughout the year. (The main season runs September through May, with a summer season filling in the gap with eclectic performances.) Main-stage tickets range generally from around C$15 to C$45.

For a more informal dramatic night out, there's the **Grafton Street Dinner Theater,** 1741 Grafton St. (✆ **902/425-1961**), which typically offers light musicals and mysteries with a three-course dinner (choice of prime rib, salmon, or chicken). Tickets cost C$42 per adult in 2009, half-price for children 12 and under.

The Club & Bar Scene

Halifax's young and restless tend to congregate in pubs, nightclubs, and on street corners along two streets that converge at the public library: Grafton Street and Spring Garden Road. If you're thirsty, wander the neighborhoods around here and you're liable to find a *Cheers*-type spot to drink the night away elbow-to-elbow with the locals.

One of the coolest places to hang out is **Economy Shoe Shop** (✆ **902/423-7463**), at 1663 Argyle St., not a shop but rather a cafe-bar where many of Halifax's prettiest people wind up sooner or later. Helpfully, they serve some sort of food all the way until 2am, and the wine list is impressive. In the evening (and late afternoons on Sat), you'll also find lively Maritime music and good beer at the **Lower Deck Pub** (✆ **902/425-1501**), one of the more popular restaurants in the Historic Properties complex on the waterfront. There's music nightly, and on Saturday afternoons (out on the patio in summer).

Local rock bars include the **Marquee Club** at 2037 Gottingen St. (✆ **902/429-3020**). And **The Maxwell's Plum** at 1600 Grafton St. (✆ **902/423-5090**) is an English pub where peanut shells litter the floor and patrons quaff from a list of dozens of 150 import and Canadian draft and bottled beers. The nightly happy-hour and pitcher specials can considerably cut your cost.

Also check out ***The Coast,*** a free newspaper widely available around Halifax, for good listings of upcoming performances.

9 THE EASTERN SHORE

Heading from Halifax to Cape Breton Island (or vice versa), you need to choose between two routes. If you're burning to get to your destination, take **Route 102** to Route 104 (the Trans-Canada Highway, the one with the maple leaf). If you're in no particular hurry and are more content venturing down narrow lanes, destination unknown, though, allow

A Road Trip to Peggy's Cove

About 42km (26 miles) southwest of Halifax is the fishing village of **Peggy's Cove** ★★ (pop. 120), which offers postcard-perfect tableaus: an octagonal lighthouse (surely one of the most photographed in the world), tiny fishing shacks, and graceful fishing boats bobbing in the postage stamp–size harbor. The bonsai-like perfection hasn't gone unnoticed by the big tour operators, however, so it's a rare summer day when you're not sharing the experience with a few hundred of your close, personal bus-tour friends. The village is home to a handful of B&Bs and a gallery, but scenic values draw the day-trippers with cameras. While there, make sure to check out the touching **Swissair Flight 111 Memorial** ★ among the rocks just before the turnoff to the cove; this site memorializes the passengers of that flight, which crashed into the Atlantic just off the coast.

Want to stay awhile? A good lodging choice in the area is **Peggy's Cove B&B** (✆ **877/725-8732** or 902/823-2265), close to the lighthouse with five rooms costing C$99 to C$145 per night; breakfast is included. Units all have phones, Wi-Fi access, and DVD players. If it's full, **Code's Oceanside Inn** (✆ **888/823-2765 or** 902/823-2765), about 2 miles away in West Dover, has two rooms and a suite for C$105 to C$195 per night. (The name isn't some mystic or cryptic puzzle. The owners are a couple whose last name is Code.)

a couple of days to wind along the Eastern Shore, mostly along **Route 7.** (***Note:*** Official tourism materials refer to this stretch as the Marine Drive instead of the Eastern Shore, for whatever reason.) Along the way you'll be rewarded with glimpses of a rugged coastline that's wilder and more remote than the coast south of Halifax. Communities here tend to be farther apart, less genteel, and stocked with far fewer services—or tourists. With its rugged terrain and remote locales, this region is a good bet for those drawn to the outdoors and seeking coastal solitude.

Be forewarned that the Eastern Shore isn't breathtakingly scenic along the main road. You'll drive mostly through cutover woodlands and scrappy towns. To get the most out of this section of the coast, become committed to making periodic detours. Drive down dead-end roads ending in coastal peninsulas, where you might come upon wild roses blooming madly in the fog, or point your car inland to the enormous interior forest, where you can still find moose—and an overarching quiet.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Routes 107 and 7 run along or near the coast from Dartmouth to Stillwater (near Sherbrooke). Other local routes—including numbers 211, 316, 16, and 344—continue onward along the coast to the causeway to Cape Breton. An excursion along the entire coastal route—from Dartmouth to Cape Breton Island with a detour to Canso—is about 400km (250 miles) in length. Driving time would vary wildly, depending on your capacity for making detours.

VISITOR INFORMATION Several tourist information centers are staffed along the route. You'll find the best stocked and most helpful centers in **Sheet Harbour** inside the **MacPhee House Museum** (next to the waterfall; ✆ **902/885-2595**); in **Sherbrooke**

Village, in the little yellow building at the entrance to the historic complex that also serves as the museum's info center (✆ **902/522-2400**); and in **Canso** at 1297 Union St., on the waterfront (✆ **902/366-2170**). All are open daily in summer.

A DRIVING TOUR OF THE EASTERN SHORE

This section assumes you'll drive northeastward from Halifax toward Cape Breton. If you're traveling the opposite direction, just hold this book upside down. (I'm kidding.)

Between Halifax and Sheet Harbour, the route plays hide-and-seek with the coast, touching coastal views periodically and then veering inland again. The most scenic areas are around wild, open-vista **Ship Harbour** and **Spry Harbour,** noted for its attractive older homes and the islands looming offshore.

At the **Fisherman's Life Museum** (✆ **902/889-2053**) in Jeddore Oyster Pond, you'll get a glimpse of life on the Eastern Shore a century ago. The humble white-shingle-and-green-trim cottage was built by James Myers in the 1850s; early in this century it became the property of his youngest son, Ervin, who raised a dozen daughters here—a popular stop for local boys, evidently—and the home and grounds have been restored to look as they might have around 1900 or 1920. It's replete with hooked rugs and a reproduction pump organ, among other period touches. A walk through the house and barn and down to the fishing dock won't take much more than 20 minutes or so. The museum is open June through mid-October, daily, from 9am until 5pm. Admission is C$3.50 adults, C$2.50 seniors and children age 6 to 17, C$7.75 families. It's located on Route 7 and is well marked.

At the town of Lake Charlotte you can opt for a side road that weaves along the coast (look for signs for Clam Harbour). The road alternately follows wooded coves and passes through inland forests; about midway you'll see signs for a turn to **Clam Harbour Beach Park** ★, one of the best beaches on this coast. A long, broad crescent beach attracts sunbathers and swimmers from Halifax and beyond; it also helps that there's a boardwalk, clean sand, and toilets and changing rooms here, plus lifeguards supervising the action on summer weekends. Look for the picnicking area set amid a spruce grove on a bluff overlooking the beach. There's a funky **sand castle competition** here once a year (which is packed; I'd avoid it), so you know the sand is plentiful and good. There's no admission charge; gates close around 8pm. Continue on up the coast from the park and you'll reemerge on Route 7 in Ship Harbour.

Between Ship and Spry harbours is the town of Tangier, home to the great tour outfit **Coastal Adventures** (✆ **877/404-2774** or 902/772-2774), which specializes in kayak tours. It's run by Scott Cunningham, who literally wrote the book on Nova Scotia kayaking (he's the author of the definitive guide to paddling this coast). This well-run operation is situated on a beautiful island-dotted part of the coast, but it specializes in multiday trips throughout Atlantic Canada. You can write (P.O. Box 77, Tangier, NS B0J 3H0) or call for a brochure well in advance of your trip, or check the company's website at **www.coastaladventures.com**.

There's also a terrific little fish-smoking business just outside Tangier, **J. Willie Krauch & Sons** ★ (✆ **800/758-4412** or 902/772-2188). The Krauch family (pronounced *craw,* not *crotch,* thank goodness) sells wood-smoked Atlantic salmon, mackerel, and eel in an unpretentious little store; they'll also give you a tour of the premises, if you like, where you can check out the old-style smoking process in action. Take some to go for a picnic. It's open until around 6pm daily.

Continuing northeast, **Sheet Harbour** is a pleasant little town of 800 or so souls, with a campground open May through September, a couple small grocery stores, two motels, and a **visitor information center** (✆ **902/885-2595**), behind which is a short nature trail and boardwalk that descends along low, rocky cascades. Inland from Sheet Harbour on Route 374 you can find the **Liscomb Game Sanctuary,** a popular destination for the sort of hearty explorers who come equipped with their own maps, compasses, canoes, and fishing rods. (There are no services to speak of here for casual travelers.) Then, east of Sheet Harbour, you pass through the wee village of **Ecum Secum,** which has nothing to attract the tourist—but is unusually gratifying to say out loud to friends after the journey.

Adjacent to the well-marked Liscombe Lodge (see below) and just over the main bridge is the **Liscomb River Trail** system. Trails follow the river both north and south of Route 7. The main hiking trail follows the river upstream for 5km (3 miles), crosses it on a suspension bridge, and then returns on the other side. The Mayflower Point Trail follows the river southward toward the coast, then loops back inland.

Continuing on Route 211 beyond historic Sherbrooke Village (see description below), you'll drive through a wonderful landscape of lakes, ocean inlets, and upland bogs and soon come to the scenic **Country Harbour Ferry.** The 12-car cable ferry crosses the broad river every half-hour, year-round, weather and river conditions permitting. The fare is C$5 per car, which includes driver and passengers. If the ferry isn't running, you'll have to turn right around and head back, so it's wise to check at the Canso or Sherbrooke visitor centers before detouring this way.

Farther along (you'll be on Rte. 316 after the ferry), you'll come to **Tor Bay Provincial Park.** It's 4km (2½ miles) off the main road but well worth the detour on a sunny day. The park features three sandy crescent beaches backed by grassy dunes and small ponds that are slowly being taken over by bog and spruce forest. The short boardwalk loop is especially worth a walk.

Way out on the eastern tip of Nova Scotia's mainland is the end-of-the-world town of **Canso** (pop. 900), which is currently in the process of being assimilated by the bigger nearby village of Guysborough, but no matter. It's still a rough-edged fishing town and oil port, windswept and foggy. The main attraction here is the ruined fort at the **Grassy Island National Historic Site** (✆ **902/295-2069**). A park-run boat takes you out to the island, which once housed a bustling community of fishermen and traders from New England, where a small interpretive center on the waterfront (open daily 10am to 6pm June to mid-September) features artifacts recovered from the island and boat schedules. A trail also links several historic sites within the island, which feels a bit melancholy. Admission to the island and park are by voluntary donation in a box; pay what you wish—I recommend a few dollars per person.

If you're coming to Canso in summer, also watch out for the annual music festival held the first week of July to honor late Canadian folk musician Stan Rogers, who perished in an airline fire in Cincinnati in 1983 at the age of just 33. The **Stan Rogers Folk Festival** (✆ **888/554-7826;** www.stanfest.com), also known in these parts as StanFest, focuses on the craft of songwriting. But big names do sometimes play here. Day passes start at C$33 per adult.

Route 16 between the intersection of Route 316 and Guysborough is an especially **scenic drive.** This road runs high and low along brawny hills, giving soaring views of Chedabucto Bay and grassy hills across the way. Also pleasant, although not quite as distinguished, is Route 344 from Guysborough to the Canso causeway. That road twists,

turns, and drops through woodlands with some nice views of the strait. It might make you wish you were the owner of a large and powerful motorcycle.

Sherbrooke Village ★★ (Kids) About half of the town of Sherbrooke comprises Sherbrooke Village, a historic section surrounded by low fences, water, and fields. You'll have to pay admission to wander around, but the price is well worth it: This is the largest restored village in all of Nova Scotia, and is unique in several respects. For one, almost all the buildings here are on their original sites (only two have been moved). That's very rare in museums like this. Second, many of the homes are still occupied by local residents—and other private homes are interspersed with the ones open to visitors. So it's not just a historic exhibit. About two dozen buildings have been restored and opened to the public, from a convincing general store to an operating blacksmith shop and post office. Look also for the former temperance hall, courthouse, printery, boatbuilding shop, drugstore, and schoolhouse. All are capably staffed by genial interpreters in costume, who can tell you what life was like around here from the 1860s forward. Be sure to ask about the source of the town's early prosperity; you might be surprised. You could easily spend up to a half-day here, depending on your (or your kids') interest level.

Rte. 7, Sherbr ooke. ✆ **888/743-7845** or 902/522-2400. http://museum.go v.ns.ca/sv. A dmission C$10 adults, C$8 seniors, C$4.25 children age 6 to 17, C$28 families. June to mid-Oct daily 9:30am–5pm.

WHERE TO STAY & DINE

Other than a handful of motels and B&Bs, few accommodations are available on the Eastern Shore beyond these three inns/resorts.

Liscombe Lodge Resort ★★ (Kids) This modern complex, owned and operated by the province, consists of a central lodge plus a series of smaller cottages and outbuildings. It's situated on a remote part of the coast, adjacent to hiking trails and a popular boating area at the mouth of the Liscomb River. The lodge bills itself as a nature lover's resort, and indeed it offers access to both forest and sea. But it's not exactly wilderness here; the well-tended lawns, modern architecture, shuffleboard, marina, free Wi-Fi, and outdoor chessboard testify to the middle-to-upper income summer-campness of the place. What makes it great for vacationing families are the tons of kid-friendly offerings (table tennis, horseshoe pitches, and so forth). Outdoor types will enjoy the guided kayak trips, hikes, and bird watches. Rooms here are modern and motel-like; the cottages and chalets have multiple bedrooms: again, good for families. The dining room is open to the public and serves resort fare (steaks, fish).

Rte. 7, Liscomb Mills, NS B0J 2A0. ✆ **800/665-6343** or 902/779-2307. Fax 902/779-2700. www.signature resorts.com. 54 units . C$140– C$350 double . P ackages and meal plans a vailable. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed mid- Oct t o mid-M ay. P ets allo wed in chalets . **Amenities:** Restaurant; fr ee bikes; fitness c enter; indoor pool; whirlpool; sauna; shuffleboar d; t ennis c ourt. *In r oom:* TV, VCR (some units), fridge (some units), hair dr yer, no phone.

Salmon River House ★ With seven rooms plus a cottage, Salmon River House is worth a look for its nice views of the river and international feel. It was built in 1850 as a cottage, and became an inn in 1920. Furnishings are as simple as you'd expect—flowery bedspreads, solid wood furniture—but the place is well run. Each room has a different configuration; specify whether you want twins, doubles, a queen, a canopied queen, or a king bed. Some units have Jacuzzis or soaker tubs, and all of them have TVs and the 19th-century equivalent of the Internet: radios. Helpfully, there are also both an informal lobster shack and a slightly fancier bistro on the premises, so you don't need to scrounge

 for grub late at night—next to impossible around here. Only downside? The inn is just 45 minutes from Halifax, and you may want to push farther north if you're on the way to PEI or Cape Breton. But if you'll spend the better part of a day at the beach or Sherbrooke Village, this is a good pick.

9931 Hwy. 7, Salmon River Bridge, NS B0J 1P0. ✆ **800/565-3353** or 902/889-3353. www.salmonriverhouse.com. 8 units. C$109–C$144 double and cottage. Packages available. AE, DISC, MC, V. Closed Nov to Apr. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants. *In room:* TV, fridge (1 unit), Jacuzzi (some units), no phone.

SeaWind Landing Country Inn ★★ What to do when your boatbuilding business tanks because the fish no longer bite? How about opening an inn? That's what a local couple did, and this lovely 8-hectare (20-acre) oceanfront compound was the happy result. (They sold the property in 2008, but the original feel remains intact.) Some of the guest rooms are located in the handsome, 130-year-old home, which has been tastefully modernized and updated. The rest are in a more recent outbuilding, whose rooms feature a whitewashed brightness, terrific peninsula and ocean views, and double Jacuzzis. (Pay less than C$100 for a room with a Jacuzzi? Here, yes.) The innkeepers are very knowledgeable about local art—much of the work on display in the inn was created locally—and they have compiled a literate, helpful guide to the region for guests. The property also has three private sand beaches, and coastal boat tours and picnic lunches can be arranged for an extra charge. The inn also serves dinner as part of some of its packages, featuring local products and wines.

1 Wharf Rd., Charlos Cove, NS B0H 1T0. ✆ **800/563-4667**. www.seawindlanding.com. 10 units. C$95–C$169 double. Packages available. AE, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* Hair dryer, Jacuzzi (most units), no phone.

10 AMHERST TO ANTIGONISH

The northernmost shore of Nova Scotia—dubbed the **Sunrise Trail** by visitor information centers and provincial tourism publications—is chock full of rolling hills and pastoral landscapes. Driving along Route 6, you pass through farmlands along the western reaches from **Amherst** to **Pugwash** and beyond; around **Tatamagouche** (locally: "Ta-Ta"), the landscape sometimes mirrors the one found on the other side of the straits on Prince Edward Island: softly rolling fields of grain, punctuated by well-tended farmhouses and barns, and rust-red soil appearing wherever the vegetation has been scraped off. Cows might dominate one field; massive bull's-eyes of rolled hay the next. This Amherst-to-Pictou drive is especially scenic very early or late on a clear day, when the low sun highlights the green of the local fields and forests.

After **Pictou,** back on the Trans-Canada Highway, you'll see more forest and hills as you make your way toward Cape Breton Island.

AMHERST

Amherst is known chiefly by travelers for the busy, bustling information center staffed by provincial tourism officials just off the Trans-Canada Highway (see "Visitor Information," below). Yet it's also a lovely small town, perched on a low hill at the edge of the sweeping **Amherst Marsh,** which demarcates the border between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It's worth slowing and taking a detour through town just to appreciate the historic streetscapes here. You might even be surprised enough to linger an hour or 2.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Amherst is the first Nova Scotia town you encounter when heading east on the Trans-Canada Highway from New Brunswick; it's the terminus for Nova Scotia Route 6 (from the north) and Route 2 (from the south). It's only about 40 minutes east of Moncton, and **VIA Rail**'s (✆ **888/842-7245**; www.viarail.ca) six-times-weekly *Ocean* train service between Montréal and Halifax stops here.

Note that there is a C$4 **toll** if you head east from Amherst on the Trans-Canada toward Halifax. One price gets you all the way to New Glasgow.

VISITOR INFORMATION The huge **Nova Scotia Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **902/667-8429**) is on Amherst's western edge, just off exit 1 of the Trans-Canada Highway. In addition to the usual vast library of brochures and pamphlets, there's an ice-cream stand, videos, helpful staff, extraordinary views across the usually windy marsh, and often a bagpiper providing the appropriate mood out in front. It's open year-round, and staffed during daylight hours. (A wing of the center with washrooms, vending machines, brochures and maps, and pay phones is open 24 hours a day in summer.)

Just east of the provincial visitor center is the **local visitor information center,** housed in a handsome old rail car. It's got more detailed information on activities in the area and usually opens daily from late May through early September. There's also a detailed (though slow-to-load) street map online at the town website, **www.amherstns.com**.

Exploring Amherst

Downtown **Amherst** is compact (just a few blocks, really), though attractive in a brick-and-sandstone way. A half-dozen or so buildings are rough gems of classical architecture, nicely offset by the trees—including a few elms that continue to soldier on despite Dutch elm disease. Notice the elaborately pedimented 1888 **courthouse** at the corner of Victoria and Church; a short stroll north from here is the sandstone Amherst First Baptist Church, with its pair of prominent turrets. Farther north are the stoutly proportioned Doric columns announcing the 1935 Dominion Public Building.

Heading east on Route 6 from the center, you'll also glimpse homes dating from the past 150 years or so. They display an eclectic range of architectural styles and materials.

Those seeking more information on Amherst's history can visit the **Cumberland County Museum,** 150 Church St. (✆ **902/667-2561**), located in the 1836 home of R. B. Dickey, one of the Fathers of Canadian Confederation. (Amazing historical footnote: No fewer than four of said Fathers hailed from Amherst.) This museum is especially strong in documenting details of local industry and labor—it's big on rugs, fabrics, and knitting. There are also tons of local census records, oral histories, and other ephemera. The museum is open Tuesday through Friday from 9am to 5pm and Saturdays from noon to 5pm. Admission costs C$3 per adult or C$5 per family.

While this isn't really a town to linger in before heading into such a lovely province, a Frommer's reader tipped me off to the extremely authentic **Old Germany Restaurant** ★ (✆ **902/667-2868**) at 80 Church St. The owners cook traditional German cuisine and fantastic desserts. It's in a strange location that looks like it once housed a fast-food joint, but never mind: The meat and beer here are very good, plus there's a kids' menu. Owners Heidi Renner-Dembour and Holger Renner, as you might have already guessed, are originally from Germany. The restaurant is open for lunch and dinner 5 days a week (closed Mon–Tues).

PUGWASH & TATAMAGOUCHE

If you're in the planning phase of your trip, note that it takes roughly 2 hours to drive from Amherst to **New Glasgow** whether you take the Trans-Canada Highway (which dips southward through Truro) or Route 6 along the northern shore. If speed is your chief objective, take the Trans-Canada; there's nothing to slow you and the driving is typically steady and fast. But you'll also notice your eyes glazing over and find yourself twirling the radio dials and singing to yourself for entertainment. And you'll pay that C$4 **toll** I mentioned in "Getting There," above.

Route 6 ★ has far more visual interest, and you'll still move speedily among sprawling farms, fields of wheat and corn, blue ocean inlets, and green coastal marshes. Look sharp and you can even spot the wide **Northumberland Straits** dotted with sails, with Prince Edward Island right over there across the way. The landscape changes frequently enough to prevent it from ever growing repetitious. As I mentioned, both routes require about the same amount of time—assuming you don't stop. But, when traveling on Route 6, you probably will be encouraged to stop and walk on beaches, order up french fries with vinegar, or shop at one of the crafts stores in the middle of nowhere. If you take Route 6, you'll also pass through **Pugwash** and **Tatamagouche,** described below.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Both towns are located on Route 6; you can't miss them from either direction.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Tatamagouche Visitor Information Center** (✆ **902/657-3285**) is in a lovely yellow house which doubles as the Fraser Cultural Centre at 362 Main St.

Exploring the Region

This region is home to a number of picnic parks, as well as local and provincial beaches. Signs along Route 6 point the way; most require a detour of a few miles. Pack a picnic and make an afternoon of it.

Pugwash, which comes from the Mi'kmaq word *pagweak,* meaning deep waters, has a slightly industrial feel, with its factory and a midsize cargo port on the Pugwash River. **Seagull Pewter** (✆ **888/955-5551** or 902/243-3850) is well known throughout the province and is made in a factory on the east side of town; look for the retail store (which also stocks antiques) on the other side of town, just west of the Pugwash River bridge on Route 6. It's open 7 days a week in the summer.

Between Pugwash and Tatamagouche you'll drive through the scenic village of **Wallace** (town motto: "A Friendly Place") as the road winds along the water and takes in fine views of the forested shores on the far side of Wallace Bay. Or should it be Wallaces? Last time through, I counted about eight villages with "Wallace" in their name. They're all tiny. East of the "main" Wallace, watch for the remains of ancient Acadian dikes in the marshes—they were built to reclaim the land here for farming (and signs point the dikes out). Also look for the famous Jost Vineyards in the area (see "Days of Wine and Rosé," below).

Tatamagouche is a pleasant fishing village with a cameo on TV (the CBC miniseries *The Week the Women Went* is based there) and a surprisingly large annual **Oktoberfest** of German beer and dancing, held at the local recreation center. For details on the festival, visit the event's website at **www.nsoktoberfest.ca**. The town is also home to the **Fraser Cultural Centre,** 362 Main St. (✆ **902/657-3285**), a former hospital and rest home which strives to preserve the region's cultural heritage through ongoing exhibits and arts

Days of Wine and Rosé

Near the hamlet of Malagash, which is midway between Wallace and Tatamagouche, look for the highway signs crafted of casks along the road; these will direct you to **Jost Vineyards** ★★ (✆ **800/565-4567;** www.jostwine.com), which produce wines you might have sipped in Halifax's better restaurants. The vineyards' success is an instructive story of persistence. The winemaking Jost family emigrated here from Germany in 1970 and began growing grapes in the local soil 8 years later; finally, in 1985, Jost's first wines were bottled and sold. Today, they're highly regarded throughout Canada.

You can take a **free tour** of the winery—in a lovely rambling red farmhouse with a great bay view—enjoy a picnic (a deli opens on the premises during the summer), or sample wines produced here and stock up on the ones that impress you most. Don't miss the "ice wine," a world-famous Canadian specialty made from naturally frozen grapes. It's usually associated with the province of Ontario; Jost's Vidal ice wine, however, again licked all contenders in a 2009 competition. At C$40 per 375-ml. bottle, it's not cheap, but good stuff never is. Impress your friends. In summer, the vineyard is open daily from 9am to 6pm; off-season, it's closed Sundays from Christmas through May 1st and closes an hour earlier every day from mid-September through mid-June. The tours are offered twice daily, at noon and 3pm, from mid-June through mid-September. (Note that the wine cellars are difficult to get down to and back up from for someone with mobility issues.)

To visit the vineyards, simply follow Route 6 from Tatamagouche to Malagash, turning right at the wine barrel and then following grape signs to the vineyard. Got to love that.

and crafts-related activities. It's open daily from June through September, and admission is free.

You can even go craft shopping here. **Sara Bonnyman Pottery** (✆ **902/657-3215**) has a studio and shop just outside town, where you'll find rustic country-style plates, mugs, and more in a speckled pattern embellished with blueberries, sunflowers, and other pleasing country motifs. The shop is located out on Route 246, about a mile from the post office.

Where to Stay

Train Station Inn (Finds) This is one of the most unique lodgings in the province—or in Canada, for that matter. You won't find Jacuzzis here, but you will get a souvenir-worthy digital photo for all time. Located down a side street in Tatamagouche's former railyard, the Train Station (a lovely, century-old brick building) itself contains just one unit: the Station Master's Suite, consisting of the entire second floor of the station. It comes with three double-bedded rooms and a small Victorian parlor, kitchenette, and balcony, so it's expensive—but it also lacks a TV or air-conditioning. Calling it a "suite" is a stretch.

The rest of the units sit in the railyard, in seven Canadian National cabooses and one boxcar. Honest. The rail cars have been refurbished as very simple rooms and vary in

comfort and character. Some are decorated in Edwardian parlor motifs with bead-board paneling and striped wallpaper; others come outfitted with hardwood floors, gas woodstoves, kitchenettes, king beds, and little sitting areas with plastic patio chairs. You can't make this stuff up. Needless to say, book into one of these. All bookings include a continental breakfast served in a men's waiting room lined with lanterns and railway memorabilia. (It doubles as a cafe.) The reception area and gift shop is located in the ladies' waiting room; pick up an engineer's cap if you like. Amazingly, there is even a dining car here, serving lunches and dinners of salmon, steak, lobster, and the like from mid-May through mid-October. Expect train buffs to be your fellow guests and diners, rather than a hip young crowd.

21 Station Rd., Tatamagouche, NS B0K 1V0. ✆ **888/724-5233** or 902/657-3222. w ww.trainstation.ca. 9 units. Caboose and boxcar rooms C$115–C$170 double; station suite C$290. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed No v–Mar. P ets allo wed with advanc e notic e. **Amenities:** Restaurant; shared guest k itchenette; shar ed guest laundr y. *In r oom (caboose only):* A/C, TV, k itchenette (2 units), fridge.

PICTOU

Pictou was established as part of a development scheme hatched by speculators from Philadelphia in 1760. Under the terms of their land grant, they needed to place some 250 settlers at the harbor. That was a problem: Few Philadelphians wanted to live there. So the company sent a ship called the *Hector* to Scotland in 1773 to drum up a few hundred desperately impoverished souls who might be amenable to starting their lives over again in North America.

They were. The ship returned with some 200 passengers, mostly Gaelic-speaking Highlanders. The stormy voyage was brutal, and the passengers nearly starved, but they made it—disembarking in high style, wearing tartans and victoriously playing bagpipes. Now, really: Isn't that the way a town *should* be settled?

The town is still genuinely Scottish enough that you might find haggis slipped into a meal if you're not paying attention. One time you're sure to see that squeamish treat is during the annual anniversary of the settlers' arrival, celebrated in mid-August each year at Pictou's 5-day **Hector Festival** (✆ **800/353-5338** or 902/485-8848). Members of the clans wear kilts and dine out in high style in memory of their ancestors; the rest of us listen to storytellers, take in the re-enacted landing (bagpipes and all) and a reconstructed settlement, and dance to talented *ceilidh* fiddlers. Ticket prices vary per event, usually no more than C$18. Many events are free.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Pictou is located on Route 106, which is just north of exit 22 off Route 104 (the south branch of the Trans-Canada Hwy.). The **Prince Edward Island ferry** is several kilometers north of town at the coast near Caribou. (See chapter 7 for details on this ferry.)

VISITOR INFORMATION The provincial **Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **902/485-6213**) is located just off the big rotary just west of downtown (at the junction of Route 6 and Route 106). A bit surprisingly, this info center is open daily from May all the way through to mid-December. Considering its size, Pictou also maintains an amazingly well-organized, designed, and researched web page at **www.townofpictou.ca**. Kudos for that; check it out.

Exploring Pictou

Pictou is a historic harborside town, with lots of interesting buildings. It's debatable whether it's worth an overnight visit, though: There's not a whole lot to do, and the town isn't terribly outward-looking in terms of welcoming visitors. Still, it does have architecture. There are so many sandstone edifices adorned with five-sided dormers here that you might feel at times like you've wandered into an Edinburgh side street by mistake. Water Street is especially pleasing to the eye, with a few boutiques, casual restaurants, and pubs filling the storefronts.

The harbor is well protected and suitable for novices who want to explore by sea kayak or canoe. Also look in on the **Hector Heritage Quay Visitor's Marina** (✆ **902/485-6960**) on the waterfront at 37 Caladh Ave., with its twice-weekly live music in summer and a variety of other events. It's open from May through October.

Look for the headquarters and factory outlet of **Grohmann Knives** at 116 Water St. (✆ **888/756-4837** or 902/485-4224), too. Located in a 1950s-mod building with a large knife piercing one corner, you'll find a good selection of quality knives (each with a lifetime guarantee) at marked-down prices. It's open daily; free half-hour factory tours are offered on weekdays between 9am and 3:30pm—but only if you can get four people together to take one.

Hector Heritage Quay Learn about the brutal hardships endured on the 1773 voyage of the singularly unseaworthy *Hector,* the boat that brought Scottish settlers to the region, at this modern small museum on the waterfront in downtown Pictou. You'll pass several intriguing exhibits en route to the museum's centerpiece: a full-size replica of the 33m (108-ft.) *Hector* at water's edge. Stop by the blacksmith and carpentry shops to get a picture of life in the colonies in the early days, too.

33 Caladh Ave. ✆ **902/485-4371.** Admission C$7 adults, C$5 seniors and students, C$2 children age 2 to 12, C$15 families. Mid-May to mid-Oct Mon–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun 10am–5pm; longer hours July–Aug.

Where to Stay

Auberge Walker Inn ★ This handsome downtown inn is located in a brick townhouse-style building dating from 1865; it overlooks one of Pictou's more active intersections. The innkeepers have done a good job of making the place comfortable while still retaining its historic sensibilities. Some rooms (such as no. 10, on the third floor) have nice harbor views. A first-floor suite has a small kitchen, Jacuzzi, and dark bedroom in back. All rooms have private bathrooms, but the conversions have come at some sacrifice—upstairs rooms have showers only, and one Frommer's reader wrote that his was so small he couldn't bend over. On the upside: The inn is perfectly situated to enjoy Pictou's restaurants and attractions.

34 Coleraine St. (P.O. Box 629), Pictou, NS B0K 1H0. ✆ **800/370-5553** or 902/485-1433. Fax 902/485-1222. www.walkerinn.com. 11 units. May to Sept C$79–C$99 double; C$149 suite. Off-season rates lower. Rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking on street, at rear of building, and in lot 1 block away. **Amenities:** Conference room. *In room:* Kitchenette (1 unit), no phone.

Braeside Inn This three-story hotel on a hill at the edge of downtown was built in 1938 as an inn, and it has been one of the town's more enduring places of lodging. Guest rooms are carpeted and comfortable, though smallish. Some suites have Jacuzzis, while all have ceiling fans, TVs, and VCRs. (Previously, guests gathered around the tube in a common television room.) The dining room has hardwood floors and views down a lawn to the harbor. Meal choices here aren't terribly daring but you can get prime rib, Yorkshire pudding, scallops, duck, salmon, and a rack of lamb. Reservations for dining are suggested.

126 Front St., Pictou, NS B0K 1H0. ✆ **800/613-7701** or 902/485-5046. Fax 902/485-1701. www.braeside inn.com. 18 units. C$65–C$175 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, MC, V. At the end ofWater St., turn right on Coleraine St. and left on Front St. **Amenities:** Dining room, guest laundry. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, fridge (some units), hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units).

Consulate Inn ★ No surprise: This doughty 1810 historic home of sandstone and ivy really was originally a consulate. Three guest rooms are upstairs in the main inn building and share a handsome sitting area; seven larger, more modern rooms are located next door in a wing; and there's yet another room off-property. The decor is country-cutesy (simple white walls, understated furniture, floral-print bedspreads, lots of wood paneling and beams), as innkeepers Debbie and Garry Jardine work to impart a romantic mood. The newer rooms are located in a walk-in basement and are smaller, but feature nice touches such as Jacuzzis and mood lighting; three more suites also have Jacuzzis and VCRs. Note that the Thistle Room has its own private patio with harbor view and awning, a big plus. The PEI ferry is just a 10-minute drive away, and the inn's also well situated for exploring Pictou. The included breakfast is served in a breakfast room.

157 Water St., Pictou, NS B0K 1H0. ✆ **800/424-8283** or 902/485-4554. Fax 902/485-1532. www.consulate inn.com. 11 units. Jun–Sept C$79–C$159 double. Rates include full breakfast. Ask about off-season rates Oct–May. AE, DC, MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, fridge (some units), Jacuzzi (some units).

Pictou Lodge Resort ★★ The original lodge and log outbuildings here have gone through a number of ownership changes—including the Canadian National Railway and an inn chain—since entrepreneurs built the compound on a grassy bluff overlooking a nice beach early in the 20th century. It's now owned privately and has been upgraded and improved with new family suites and a set of executive "chalets" that have nothing at all in common with the prevailing Abe Lincoln School of Architecture theme of the place. (They're modern-looking and full of windows to let in the view—but very, very pricey.) The splendid ocean views, of course, never go out of style. The lodge is located about a 10-minute drive from downtown Pictou, yet has a very remote feel. The log rooms, most of which have kitchenettes, have a lot more character (but also look a bit dowdy); newer rooms have the blandness of modern motel rooms anywhere. Lunch and dinner are served in an Adirondack-style lodge that was hammered together with classic beams; there's both a lounge with windows opening onto the stunning view and a restaurant with a fireplace (see "Where to Dine," below).

172 Lodge Rd. (P.O. Box 1539), Pictou, NS B0K 1H0. ✆ **800/495-6343** or 902/485-4322. Fax 902/485-4945. www.pictoulodge.com. 61 units. C$139–C$229 double, chalets and cottages C$165-C$425. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May. Follow Shore Rd. from downtown toward PEI ferry; watch for signs. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bikes; boats; playground; outdoor pool; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV (some units), fridge (some units), Jacuzzi (some units), kitchenette (some units).

Where to Dine

The **Pictou Lodge Resort ★★** (see above) features several distinct dining areas, one with ocean views and one with fireplaces, plus special jazz nights (on Tues) and full brunches (on Sun). It's definitely the preferred pick in town.

If you want something more casual, a wide choice of cafes, pubs, chip shops, and tea rooms line **Water Street** and its continuation to the east (Front St.). Several more choices can be found by walking a block to the water and Caladh Avenue. The downtown area is so compact here that you can just go from place to place, checking the menus until you find something you like.

Piper's Landing CONTINENTAL This contemporary, attractive dining room on a stretch of residential road just outside Pictou remains a local favorite and your best bet in the area for a sophisticated meal. The interior is sparely decorated and understated. Likewise, the menu looks simple—European-influenced entrees of grilled beef tenderloin, pork schnitzel, and big seafood platters—but there's some flair in the preparation. There's a small wine list, as well.

Rte. 376, Lyons Brook (5km/3 miles west of downtown Pictou). ✆ **902/485-1200.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$16–C$25. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5–8pm; Sun 11am–9pm. From the Pictou Rotary take Rte. 376 toward Lyons Brook; it's 3km (1¾ miles) on your left.

ANTIGONISH

Antigonish can trace its European roots back to the 1650s (the French came first; the British later), and today the town of 4,000-plus residents is still the local market town, with a bustling main street and St. Francis Xavier University, which was founded in 1853. For rural Nova Scotia, the town has a relatively busy commercial center; be prepared for some traffic midsummer. This is a good spot to stock up on groceries or grab a bite for lunch. There are several cafes on Main Street and a shop or two worth browsing.

For a mild outdoor adventure, drive about 8 to 9km (5 or 6 miles) northeast of town on Route 337 (past the hospital) and look for the **Fairmont Ridge Trail** ★. Here you'll find a half-dozen gentle hiking loops, ranging from 3 to 11km (2–7 miles) in length, that take you through hayfields and past babbling brooks into ravines and forests of old-growth trees. There are many junctions and intersections on the trail, but trail maps are posted on the trail. Eagles and even bears have reportedly been sighted in these woods; check with the tourist office (see "Visitor Information," below) about current conditions on the trail if you're serious about hiking it.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Antigonish is on Route 104 (Trans-Canada Hwy.) 53km (33 miles) west of the Canso Causeway (the connection to Cape Breton Island).

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Tourist Office** (✆ **902/863-4921**) is located at 56 West Rd. (exit 32 on the Trans-Canada Hwy.). It's open daily from 9:30am to 8pm in summer, 10am to 6pm in June, September, and October.

SPECIAL EVENTS **The Highland Games** ★ have been staged in mid-July annually since 1861. What started as a community diversion has become an international event—these are now the oldest continuously played Highland games in North America, a place to experience everything Scottish from piping to dancing to the feat of dexterity known

Fun Facts The Name Game

The origins of the name Antigonish—correctly pronounced, it sounds more like "ahn-*tee*-gun-ish" than "anti-goanish"—has created a little contention among linguists with the time on their hands to research the matter. In the original native tongue, it meant either "five-forked rivers of fish" or (I'm not making this up) "the place where branches get torn off by bears gathering beech nuts to eat." There's no real consensus. But that's alright; I like both versions just fine.

as "tossing the caber" (the caber being a heavy log or pole that's tossed for accuracy, not distance). Contact the folks at the local **Antigonish Highland Society** (✆ **902/863-4275;** www.antigonishhighlandgames.ca) for each summer's dates and details. Rooms are scarce during the 3-day games (Fri–Sun), so if you plan to attend, be sure to book well ahead. You can buy daily and event tickets (C$10–C$20 per adult, free to C$5 per child age 6–16) or a 3-day passport.

The **Festival Antigonish** ★ (✆ **800/563-7529** or 902/867-3333) is a different event, a summer-long program of theater and live performances held on the campus of St. Francis Xavier University. It usually begins in late June or early July and runs through Labor Day. Shows might range from productions written by local playwrights to Agatha Christie tales, *Rumpelstiltskin,* or a Woody Guthrie tribute act. Tickets for children's and "Stage 2" productions are C$10 or less; tickets for the main-stage, grown-up performances range from about C$15 to C$30. Or you can pre-order one of several all-inclusive passes for about C$90. The organization's website is at **www.festivalantigonish.com**.

Where to Stay

Antigonish is located just off the Trans-Canada Highway, the last town of any size before you reach Cape Breton Island. As such, it's home to a number of chain motels, both downtown and on the "strip" leading into town. If nightfall is coming, and you're bound for Cape Breton, I'd suggest overnighting here and pushing off the next morning. That's because Port Hastings and Port Hawkesbury—the first towns you encounter on Cape Breton—are also full of chain motels. Antigonish is a better choice, with better restaurants.

Budget travelers can also book a no-frills dorm room or apartment at **St. Francis Xavier University** (✆ **902/867-2855** or 877/STAY-AT-X [782-9289]) from mid-May through mid-August. The dorm rooms are mostly simple and share hallway washrooms, but they include all the basics: linens, pillows, towels, and soap. Apartments have private bathrooms and kitchens—but no utensils; bring your own. Dorm room rates here range from about C$40 to C$125 for two, including tax, while the dorm apartments (four single bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a living room) cost from C$115 to C$145 per night. Meals are available in the Morrison Dining Hall for a small charge. The best thing about staying here is that you get the use of some campus facilities—and walk-to-it proximity to the summer theater festival. If you're looking for a room and it's after business hours, head to the Security Office in the basement of MacKinnon Hall and ask nicely.

At the west edge of town on the Trans-Canada Highway (Route 104), you'll find the plain **Chateau Motel** (✆ **877/339-8544** or 902/863-4871) with about 16 double rooms (queen and king beds) and simple cottages (double beds, but full kitchens). There's also a Laundromat on the premises. Rates are C$69 to C$99 per night.

Maritime Inn Antigonish The basic, modern Maritime Inn Antigonish has benefited from renovations. Rooms are comfortable and clean, if unexceptional. The best thing about the place? Its location on Antigonish's Main Street, where you can easily walk to the city's best restaurant cafe and take care of your basic shopping needs without getting back in the car. The cheapest rooms are drive-up, motel style, while the more expensive suites include two bedrooms (one with a queen bed, one with a king), plus a sitting room with sofa and several televisions. A restaurant on the premises also serves three meals daily.

158 Main St., Antigonish, NS B2G 2B7. ✆ **888/662-7484** or 902/863-4001. Fax 902/863-2672. www.maritimeinns.com/antigonish. 32 units. C$115–C$193 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, TV.

Where to Dine

Lobster Treat (Kids) SEAFOOD Housed in a red-shingled former schoolhouse (note the hanging lamps, which are original) west of town on the Trans-Canada Highway, Lobster Treat has been doing seafood for a few decades and is something of an institution around here. Foodies have even made the trip from America to check it out. It's not fancy, featuring family-restaurant decor like potted plants and mauve carpeting. But the seafood is fresh. The menu ranges from a traditional Nova Scotia boiled lobster dinner (which almost everyone orders) to surf-and-turf combos and seafood concoctions. You can get haddock just about anywhere in the Maritimes, but it's particularly good here. Complete meals for kids are available for about C$5, and the place also serves pasta, chicken, and steaks in case you don't want lobster. But everyone does.

241 Post Rd. (Rte. 104). ✆ **902/863-5465.** Reservations not necessary. Main courses C$8–C$30 at dinner; most dishes under C$20. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11am–10pm. Closed late Dec to mid-Apr.

Sunshine on Main Café & Bistro ★ BISTRO This creative bistro fare with attractive pricing is right in the heart of Antigonish's commercial district. Its interior is dominated by a nice wall mural, and bright, happy colors. The creative lunch menu includes a healthy selection of sandwiches and salads. Come evening, selections expand and get fancier, with an emphasis on pasta (a seafood fettuccine or linguine with clams and vegetables might be on offer). There's also a good choice of steaks, thin-crust pizzas, and chicken and fish dishes—but I think of the place more as a lunch or snack spot than a serious dinner destination.

332 Main St. ✆ **902/863-5851.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$8–C$14 at lunch, C$14–C$23 at dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 7am–9:30pm; Fri–Sat 7:30am–10pm (shorter hours off-season).

11 CAPE BRETON ISLAND ★★★

Isolated and craggy Cape Breton Island—Nova Scotia's northernmost land mass—should be tops on a list of don't-miss destinations for travelers to Nova Scotia, especially those who like outdoor adventures or great views. The island's chief draw is **Cape Breton Highlands National Park,** a knockout park up at the top of the island's western lobe. There's also the historic fort at **Louisbourg** and scenic **Bras d'Or Lake,** an inland saltwater lake that nearly cleaves the island in two.

Above all, there are the drives: It's hard to find a road on this island that's *not* a scenic route. Some of the vistas are wild and dramatic, some green and pastoral, but all of them will have you clicking your camera furiously.

When traveling on this island, be aware of the cultural context. Just as southern Nova Scotia was largely settled by Loyalists fleeing the United States after England lost the War of Independence, Cape Breton was principally settled by Highlander Scots whose families came out on the wrong side of rebellions against the crown overseas. You can still hear their heritage here, both in the accents of people in the villages and in the great popularity of Scottish-style folk music throughout the island.

You'll often hear references to the **Cabot Trail** ★★★ while on the island. This is the official designation for the 300km (186-mile) roadway circling around the northwest

corner of the island and the national park. It's named for John Cabot, whom many believe first set foot on North American soil near Cape North. (However, many scholars disagree; it's not a fact, and Cabot may have made landfall on Newfoundland first. Or even somewhere else.)

The one "problem" with this island is that it's very remote, so tourism hasn't really developed with the times. As such, it's hard to find many accommodations beyond the ubiquitous, variable-quality B&Bs scattered around the isle. Some travelers base themselves in **Baddeck,** which is centrally located and has a small concentration of lodgings and restaurants. It's true that you can reach both the national park and the historic settlement of Louisbourg from Baddeck. But I have to confess: I find the town boring, and a bit twee.

I'd much prefer staying in a small local village such as **Mabou,** or in the Margaree Valley, or scoping out a cottage rental somewhere. (The southeastern portion of the island, near Isle Madame and Port Hawkesbury, isn't nearly as pretty as the rest of it. Focus exclusively on the western and central sections if you'll only be here a couple days.)

Oh, and one more thing: If you've got golf clubs and some game, bring 'em. The golfing is wonderfully scenic here—but it's tough.

For your convenience, I've divided this section into two parts: one on the bulk of Cape Breton Island, and then one on Cape Breton Highlands National Park itself. (For specific information on just the park, jump ahead to the next section on p. 159.) Geographically, though, the park is likely second on your itinerary: Most travelers enter the island, scoop up info, then make a beeline for lovely uplands areas in Mabou or the Margaree Valley for the night. Then they head straight for the **Cabot Trail,** the winding, spectacular coastal road which takes you right into the national park.

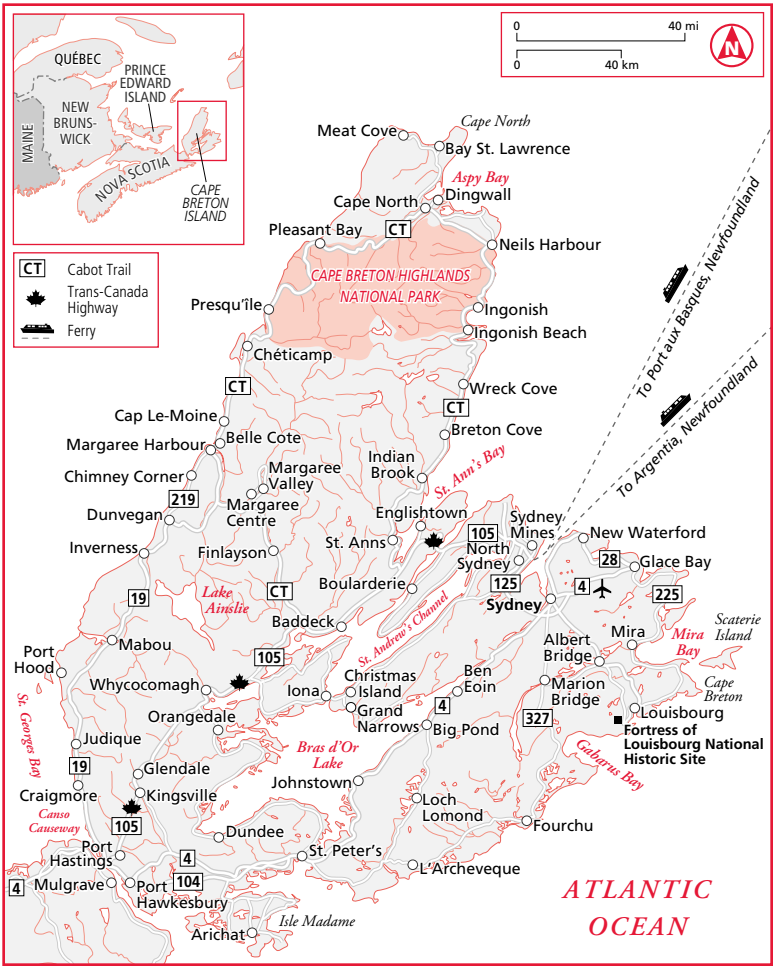
ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Cape Breton is connected to the mainland via the Canso Causeway, a manmade stone causeway built in 1955 with 10 million tons of rock. (You can see the mountain which was sacrificed for the cause as you approach the island on the Trans-Canada Hwy.) The causeway, which is 200 ft. high and ¾-mile long, is 262km (163 miles) from the New Brunswick border at Amherst and 272km (169 miles) from Halifax—a little less than 3 hours' drive from either point if you take the fastest route possible and don't stop.

But you're just getting started: once you cross the causeway onto the island, it takes another 2 to 3 hours to reach the best parts, such as the national park. Baddeck, Mabou, the Margaree Valley, and Louisbourg are a little closer—they can all be reached in 1 to 2 hours' driving, maximum.

VISITOR INFORMATION A number of tiny local tourist information centers dot Cape Breton Island, but you're best off grabbing a pile of info at the bustling **Port Hastings Info Centre** (✆ **902/625-4201**), which is on your right just after you cross the causeway onto the island. (One and done, that's what I say.) It's open daily from around 8am until about 8:30pm most of the year, closed only from January through April.

SPECIAL E VENTS **Celtic Colours** ★★★ (✆ **877/285-2321** or 902/562-6700; www.celtic-colours.com) is a big, island-wide annual music shindig timed to approximate the peak of the lovely highland foliage in early October. Few tourists know about it, and the concentration of local Celtic musicians getting together for good times and music beneath lovely foliage is simply breathtaking if you're into this sort of thing. It



usually begins in the second week of October and lasts more than 10 days: a foot-stompin', pennywhistlin', fiddle-playin' 10 days. The musical performances, by such international stars as the Chieftains—or, even better, the up-and-coming next Chieftains—are the obvious highlight, though they can cost as much as C$60 per person for a real headline act. More typical *ceilidh* nights (see below) cost about C$20, and popular local performers sell out months in advance; check the website or call well ahead if you've got your heart set on a particular act. Otherwise, just buy a ticket to anything. You can't go wrong. Stages and venues are scattered all over Cape Breton Island, but the heaviest concentration of events takes place near the festival headquarters in Sydney.

MABOU & VICINITY ★★

The little village of Mabou sits on a deep, protected inlet along the island's western shore. This former coal-mining town has made itself over as a lobster-fishing town, though you don't come here for crustaceans; the seafood is shipped out to Halifax and beyond. Instead, the lovely scenery and culture are what you come for. Attractive drives and bike rides are easy to find in the area; almost any road you choose is an opportunity to break out the camera. The town itself consists of a short main street, a clump of homes, a gas station, a few eateries and services, plus (if you can find it) a scenic little beach.

But there's a hidden bonus to the area, giving it an importance disproportionate to its size: Local residents are strongly oriented toward **music,** even more so than is usual on already-musical Cape Breton Isle. The local kids, nearly all of Scottish descent, grow up playing instruments, singing, and dancing; amazingly, this tiny town has produced not only several international hit Celtic music acts, but also the former premier of Nova Scotia (Rodney MacDonald), a former step dancer and fiddler who was elected in 2006 at the age of just 34 and served as premier for 3 years.

Evening entertainment in Mabou revolves around fiddle playing, square dancing, and the traditional gathering of musicians and storytellers known as a ***ceilidh*** ★★★ (*kay*-lee). These planned and impromptu musical events take place in pubs, civic buildings, outdoors, people's homes . . . anywhere. To find out what's going on, stop by the village **grocery store, The Mull** pub right across the street, or the **Red Shoe** pub (see "Where to Dine," below) and scope out their bulletin boards and calendars. You might also check with the **Strathspey Place Theatre** (✆ **902/945-5300;** www.strathspeyplace.com) on Route 19. It offers occasional Celtic music events too, usually for C$15 to C$20 per person.

In a handsome valley between Mabou and Inverness is the distinctive post-and-beam **Glenora Distillery** ★ (✆ **800/839-0491** or 902/258-2662). This modern distillery—North America's only single-malt whisky ("scotch") producer—began producing spirits from the pure local stream in 1990, and selling it in 2000. Your tour guide will tell you that the Cape Breton water is what makes all the difference, and is in fact the reason the owner chose to put the factory here—seemingly in the middle of nowhere. They use Kentucky bourbon casks to age the whisky, because the distillers here believe those impart a mellower taste to their spirits than the traditional sherry casks.

Production runs take place each fall, but tours of the facility are offered throughout the year. Tours cost C$7 and last about a half-hour (offered daily 9am–5pm), culminating in welcome free samples; they also conveniently end near the gift shop, where you can buy local music CDs, gift glasses, even bottles of the whisky itself (for at least C$80 a pop). The owner can't call the product scotch, by the way, since it isn't made in Scotland, hence "Canadian single malt whisky."

The distillery complex also includes an adjoining **restaurant** (open seasonally) and a nine-room **hotel** with rooms and chalets on a hillside overlooking the valley (see below); traditional music is often scheduled for weekends or evenings in the contemporary pub.

Where to Stay

Glenora Inn & Distillery ★★ When was the last time you spent the night sleeping next to a huge illicit stash of moonshine? Okay, I exaggerate. A little. This distiller of single-malt whisky (see above) offers nine modern hotel rooms over a courtyard next to a pub, beside the distillery. They're contemporary yet rustic, with easy access to said pub and a restaurant (which often feature live performers from the area). There are also a

half-dozen attractive log chalets, of one to three bedrooms each, with woody interiors on the hills overlooking the distillery. These are perfect for either lovebirds or families. Each chalet has a Jacuzzi, satellite TV, and wonderful view of the mist-covered valley below. It all has the feel of being tucked in a remote vale in the Scottish Highlands. Note that the inn's pub doesn't open until mid-June, the restaurant until early July.

Rte. 19, Glen ville, NS B0E 1X0. ✆ **800/839-0491.** w ww.glenoradistillery.com. 15 units . C$125–C$175 double; C$175–C$295 chalet. AE, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* TV, Jacuzzi (some units).

Haus Treuburg Country Inn and Cottages ★ Located a few miles from Mabou in the undistinguished oceanside fishing village of Port Hood, Haus Treuburg is a handsome Queen Anne–style home dating from 1914. The three guest rooms in the main building (one is a suite) are nicely furnished in a spare style, with down duvets and lots of wood. As nice as they are, the small two-room cottages behind the house are a better deal. Each comes with a private deck, ocean view, and gas barbecue. Four-course dinners at the inn cost about C$35 (expect German-Italian cuisine, including apple strudel), and a full "Sunday morning breakfast" is available to guests (for an extra charge) every morning of the week. Yes, there's Wi-Fi access.

175 M ain St. (P .O. Bo x 92), P ort Hood , NS B0E 2W0. ✆ **902/787-2116.** F ax 902/787-3216. w ww.haus treuburg.com. 6 units . C$110–C$120 double; C$140 c ottage. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 dining r ooms; babysitting. *In room:* TV/VCR.

Mabou R iver Inn ★★ Finds Located not far from the river and adjacent to the Mother of Sorrows Pioneer Shrine (dedicated to the settlers of the Mabou area), this former boarding school was converted twice, first into a winning youth hostel and then into this homey little inn just off the main road. Hosts Donna and David Cameron keep things running smoothly and dispense great advice; nature lovers will appreciate the opportunity to hike, kayak, fish, and mountain-bike on the scenic Ceilidh Trail using the inn's rental equipment, while night owls can stroll a few minutes across the bridge and into town to check out the local traditional music offerings that fill Mabou in summer. Note that while all nine of the main inn rooms come with their own private bathrooms, you have to put on your slippers and walk to get to seven of them. There are also three two-bedroom apartment suites good for families, since they come with TVs, VCRs, kitchens, and phones. The kitchen and dining room for guests are useful: at night the staff cooks up good pizzas and serves beer and wine with them.

19 S outhwest R idge Rd . (P.O. Bo x 255), M abou, NS B0E 1X0. ✆ **888/627-9744** or 902/945-2356. F ax 902/945-2605. w ww.mabouriverinn.com. 12 units . C$89– C$99 double; C$135– C$145 suit e. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bike and sea k ayak r entals. *In r oom:* TV/VCR (some units), k itchenette (some units), no phone (some units).

Where to Dine

The Mull Café & Deli CAFE Owned by the same folks who own the Duncreigan Inn in town, The Mull is a simple country deli that serves simple food. You can get something basic like seafood chowder, fish and chips, a burger, or one of the deli-style sandwiches. There's also a dinner-type menu, with entrees like grilled haddock, New York strip loin, stir-fried chicken, and good pasta selections. Translation: this is more than just bar grub. Don't expect to be bowled over by fancy food; do expect a filling meal and good company.

Rte. 19 (just north of the village), Mabou. ✆ **902/945-2244.** Reservations accepted for parties of 6 or more. Sandwiches C$6–C$9; main courses C$7–C$22. AE, MC, V. Daily 11am–8pm (closes at 7pm in wint er).

The Red Shoe Pub ★★ (Finds) CANADIAN I like this place a lot. You can't find a more local pub than "the Shoe" (as it's known here), owned by the famous Rankin family of musicians and open from June through mid-October. I remember when this was a gloriously hazy dive of fiddle music, cigarette smoke, sassy waitresses, and heavy pub fare. Not now: The province is smoke-free, and the menu has been completely revamped—you can get a goat-cheese panini, a pulled-pork sandwich, some beautifully caloric Nova Scotia poutine, a bowl of seafood chowder with cheddar biscuits, steak frites, or char-broiled salmon. There are requisite ales on tap and in bottles, of course. The real highlight, though, is the daily scheduled musical performances in the pub—the next Celtic music star might be playing for a small donation or cover charge on the night you swing by. Be aware that this place is small, so it can get a bit crowded and claustrophobic; it helps to know a local, though the influx of summer tourists keeps the mix interesting. A small but welcome kids' menu, and a card of surprisingly upscale desserts (gingerbread, crème brûlée, toffee pudding), are two more reasons to stop by. Don't miss it if you're in town.

Main St. (Hwy. 19), Mabou. ✆ **902/945-2996.** Entrees C$9–C$19. MC, V. June–mid to Oct Mon–Wed daily 11:30am–11pm; Thurs–Sat 11:30am–2am; Sun noon–11pm.

MARGAREE VALLEY ★

West of Baddeck and south of Chéticamp, the **Margaree Valley** consists of the area from the village called Margaree Valley (near the headwaters of the Margaree River) to Margaree Harbor, downriver on Cape Breton's west coast. Some seven small Margaree-themed communities are clustered along this valley floor, a world apart from the rugged drama of the surf-battered coast—it's more reminiscent of Vermont than Maine. The **Cabot Trail** ★★★ gently rises and falls here on the shoulders of rounded hills flanking the valley, offering views of farmed floodplains and glimpses of a shining river. The whole area is best explored by slow and aimless driving, or by bike or canoe if you've brought one along with you. And, in autumn, the foliage here is often among eastern Canada's very best.

The **Margaree River** is a bona fide celebrity in fishing circles—widely regarded as one of the most productive Atlantic salmon rivers in North America, and the salmon have continued to return to spawn here in recent years, which is unfortunately *not* the case on many other waterways of Atlantic Canada. The river has been closed to all types of fishing except fly-fishing since the 1880s, and in 1991 it was designated a Canadian Heritage River.

Learn about the river's heritage at the **Margaree Salmon Museum** ★ (✆ **902/248-2848**) in North East Margaree. The handsome museum building features a brief video about the life cycle of the salmon, and its exhibits include fishermen photos, antique rods (including an impressive 16-footer), examples of seized poaching equipment—plus hundreds of skillfully hand-tied salmon flies. (You've got to be a buff to appreciate those, maybe.) If you want to fish, museum docents can help you find a guide to bring you out on the river; late spring and early fall are usually the times of year when the fish are biting. The museum is open daily mid-June through mid-October, 9am to 5pm. Admission is C$2 per adult, C$1 per child.

Also make a point of dropping by **Cape Breton Clay** ★★ (✆ **902/235-2467;** www.capebretonclay.com), northeast of the salmon museum. Margaree Valley native Bell Fraser's work is truly unique. Fish, crab, lobster, starfish, ear of corn, and other motifs are worked into her platters and bowls in ways that will surprise and delight even pottery

haters. Bell's colorful hand-painted lobster and starfish platters bring a whole new interpretation to the serving plate, while her fish-handled serving bowl is reminiscent of the local river's leaping, silvery trout. The shop is open from June through mid-October, 10am to 5pm, it's definitely worth a stop; individual pieces might run from C$60 to C$300. Don't miss "the Koop" next door, either, a place where real—and Bell's ceramic—chickens commingle.

Where to Stay

The Normaway Inn ★ Down a drive lined with Scotch pines, the Normaway is a throwback—though it's catching up with the times now. Built in 1928 and run by the same family since the 1940s, it was once the sort of place anglers dressed in tweed. It's no longer a luxury getaway; families and honeymooners come to the 500-acre compound for fresh air, quiet, and local music. Ten rooms are situated in the main lodge, which is rugged in a loveable stonework-and-exposed beam way; first-floor rooms, which are bigger and have corner windows, are probably the best of the lot. There are also 17 cottages, of two types, spread about the property a short walk from the lodge—configurations and views vary considerably, but none of the cabins have kitchens or air-conditioning. The original four Normaway cottages have hardwood floors and spare interiors; built in the '40s, they're smaller and rougher around the edges. Newer cottages have touches like whirlpool tubs, and all but two have woodstoves; some have two bedrooms, and these are the units of choice for the family seeking peace and quiet. The newest additions are three expensive suites in the MacPherson House, about 400m (a quarter-mile) from the lodge. The lodge's dining room, decorated in simple country farmhouse style, is known for its salmon and lamb; subscribe to a meal plan if you want your breakfast and dinner cooked daily. Guests really seem to enjoy the entertainment here, events ranging from films to live Acadian music, storytelling, and fiddling. (A weekly dance is also held in the inn's red barn, attracting hundreds of locals and guests.) All in all, Normaway offers a great local experience—so long as you can cope with the little simplicity, weak Wi-Fi, and occasional mosquito in your cabin.

P.O. Box 121, Margaree Valley, NS B0E 2C0. ✆ **800/565-9463** or 902/248-2987. Fax 902/248-2600. www.normaway.com. 30 units. C$99–C$149 double, C$179–C$269 suite; C$139–C$189 cottage. 2-night minimum stay (some dates) July–Aug. MAP meal plans available. DC, MC, V. Closed late Oct to May. Pets allowed in cottages only. **Amenities:** Dining room; free bikes; tennis court. *In room:* No phone.

CHETICAMP ★

The Acadian town of **Chéticamp** is the western gateway to Cape Breton Highlands National Park, and the center of French-speaking culture on Cape Breton. The change is rather obvious as you drive northward from Margaree Harbour—the family names suddenly go from MacDonald to Doucet, and the cuisine turns on its head all at once. The town is an assortment of restaurants, boutiques, and tourist establishments spread along a Main Street closely hugging the harbor. A winding **boardwalk ★** follows harbor's edge through much of town, and this is a great spot to stretch your legs from the drive and have a look at the local geography. Chéticamp Island sits just across the water; the mighty coastal hills of the national park are visible just up the coast.

Chéticamp is famous worldwide for its hooked rugs, a craft perfected here by the early Acadian settlers. Those curious about the craft should allow time for a stop at Les Trois Pignons, which houses the **Elizabeth LeFort Gallery** and **the Hooked Rug Museum ★** (✆ **902/224-2642;** www.lestroispignons.com). It is located on Main Street in the north

end of town and displays some 300 fine tapestries, many created by Elizabeth LeFort, who was Canada's premier rug-hooking artist for many decades until she passed away in 2005—check out her tableau of U.S. presidents from 1959, which required 1.7 *million* loops to be hooked. You can also view tools used for the craft. The museum and gallery are usually open from mid-May to early October, daily 9am to 5pm (until 7pm in July and August). Admission is C$5 per adult, C$4 for seniors, C$3.50 students, C$12 for families, and free for children 5 and under.

In the 1930s, artisans formed the **Co-operative Artisanale de Chéticamp,** located at 5067 Main St. (✆ **902/224-2170**). A selection of hooked rugs—from tiny ones on up—are sold here, along with other trinkets and souvenirs. There's often a weaver or other craftsperson at work in the shop. A small local museum downstairs (admission is free) chronicles the life and times of the early Acadian settlers and their descendants. It's closed from mid-October to May.

Several boat tour operators are based in Chéticamp Harbor. **Love Boat Seaside Whale Cruises** (✆ **800/959-4253** or 902/224-2400) sets out in search of whales, seals, and scenery, and has hydrophones on board for listening to any whales you may encounter. (No, Captain Stubing will not be your captain.) The tours take 2½ to 3 hours.

The most pleasing drive or bike ride in the area is out to Chéticamp Island, connected to the main highway by a road and bridge. Look for the turnoff just south of town; the road is just north of the gift shop.

Where to Stay

A handful of motels service the thousands of travelers who pass through each summer. **Laurie's Motor Inn,** on Main Street (✆ **800/959-4253** or 902/224-2400), has more than 50 motel rooms and newer suites in a string of buildings situated right in town; rates run from C$99 to C$299 per night (mostly toward the lower end of that range). The inn also manages some nice rental homes and apartments around town for longer stays; inquire if you're interested in something bigger or need cooking facilities.

Parkview Motel This basic, comfortable motel's biggest advantage is its location—within *walking distance* of the national park's visitor center, and away from the bustle of Chéticamp's downtown. Don't expect anything fancy; rooms have cable TV and somewhat upgraded bathrooms, and that's about it. There's a dining room and lounge in a building across the street, where a half-dozen newer rooms are also located—these units have a number of amenities (coffeemakers, refrigerators, microwave ovens) unavailable in the main building's 11 motel units, plus better, actually quite scenic, views of the Chéticamp River and the island's mountains.

Cabot Trail (P.O. Box 117), Chéticamp, NS B0E 1H0. ✆ **877/224-3232** or 902/224-3232. Fax 902/224-2596. www.parkviewresort.com. 17 units. C$79–C$109 double. AE, MC, V. Closed mid-Sept to Apr. Hotel is 3 miles north of downtown Chéticamp on Cabot Trail. **Amenities:** Dining room; bar; bike rentals. *In room:* A/C (some units), TV, fridge (some units).

Pilot Whale Chalets ★ These spare, modern cottages each have at least two bedrooms and full housekeeping facilities, including microwaves, TVs, VCRs, gas barbecues for firing up steaks, coffeemakers, decks, and woodstoves; some even have Jacuzzis and fireplaces, as well. They're plain but attractive, and their best feature is the great view northward toward the coastal mountains. The lodge has also added some basement apartment suites to several of the cottages, which does impinge upon the privacy of both cottage dwellers and suite dwellers. All rooms now have phones, DVD players, and tubs;

for more space and comfort, ask about the three-bedroom cottage with king beds, two bathrooms with whirlpools, Wi-Fi, and a private laundry—it sleeps up to six people. A small beach sits adjacent to the hotel property.

Rte. 19, Chéticamp, NS B0E 1H0. ✆ **902/224-1040.** Fax 902/224-1540. www.pilotwhalechalets.com. 13 units. C$95– C$115 double , C$159– C$249 cabin. AE, MC, V. *In room:* TV/VCR/DVD, k itchenette (some units), Jacuzzi (some units).

Where to Dine

La Boulangerie Aucoin (✆ **902/224-3220**) has been a staple of Chéticamp daily life since the 1950s. Located just off the Cabot Trail between the town and the national park (look for signs), the place is full of fresh-baked goods; ask what's just out of the oven when you get to the counter. Among the potential options: croissants, scones, fresh bread, and (yum) berry pies. This is a great place to fuel up on snacks before setting off into the park.

Restaurant Acadien ACADIAN This local restaurant is attached to a crafts shop on the south side of town (the Co-operative Artisanale; see above) and has the feel of a cafeteria. Servers wear costumes inspired by traditional Acadian dress, and the menu draws heavily on tried-and-true Acadian cuisine, just as you'd expect it to. Look for *fricot* (a sort of chicken-and-potato soup), stewed potatoes, and the meat pies for which this region is renowned. They also do lobster, fried fish, turkey dinners, and other more traditionally Anglo fare. Also on the menu: baked beans, bottled beer, blood pudding (for the brave of heart) and butterscotch and blueberry pies (among others).

15067 Main St. ✆ **902/224-3207.** Reservations recommended. Breakfast items C$3.50–C$5; lunch and dinner entrees C$4–C$17. AE, MC, V. Daily 7am–9pm. Closed Nov to mid-May.

PLEASANT BAY ★

At the north end of the Cabot Trail's exhilarating run along the island's western cliffs, the road turns inland to the village of **Pleasant Bay.** You need to sneak off the Trail (down Harbour Road, naturally) to find a surprise: a simple, attractive little harbor protected by a man-made jetty, complete with bobbing brightly painted fishing boats. It's just a short walk off the main road and sits at the base of rounded, forested mountains that plunge down to the sea. You know what to do: Break out that camera all over again and impress friends with your foray into the "real" Nova Scotia off the main roads.

The **Whale Interpretive Centre** (✆ **902/224-1411**), built on a rise overlooking the harbor, features exhibits to help explain why the waters offshore are so rich with marine life—not to mention *life-sized* models of some of the local whales. It's open daily, June through mid-October 9am to 5pm; admission is C$4.50 for adults, C$3.50 for children and seniors, and C$14 for families.

Whale-watching tours are offered three to five times daily from June through October from the harbor by Capt. Mark Timmons of **Capt. Mark's Whale and Seal Cruise** (✆ **888/754-5112** or 902/224-1316; www.whaleandsealcruise.com). Timmons's 2½-hour cruises on his 13m (42-ft.) *Double Hookup* provide unrivaled glimpses at the rugged coast both north and south, and often a close-up look at whales (almost always pilot whales, frequently finbacks and minkes, occasionally humpbacks). The boat has a hydrophone on board, so you can hear the plaintive whale calls underwater. Trips are C$25 per adult, C$12 children age 6 to 15, and reservations are encouraged. The same outfit also offers Zodiac sea tours in 6m (21-ft.) inflatable boats, though you'll spend more—and get

considerably wetter—if you take one: The cost is C$44 per adult, C$37 for kids age 8 to 15. Seniors get discounts on first or last sailings.

If you bear right at the "Y" and continue northward, the road wraps around the coastal hills and turns to gravel after 5km (3 miles). Keep going another 3 to 5km (2 or 3 miles). Here you'll come to a spectacular **coastal hiking trail** ★★, which runs to **Pollett's Cove,** about 10km (6 miles) up the coast. A dozen families once lived here; all that remain now are two cemeteries. The cove and the trail are on private land, but hiking and other quiet recreation are allowed.

CAPE NORTH ★★

Cape North is a recommended detour for adventurous travelers hoping to get off that heavily trafficked Cabot Trail. Outdoor types say Cape North is much like the Cabot Trail used to be 20 or 30 years ago—before the glossy travel magazines showed up and started trumpeting its glories, leading to a huge influx of tourists. So if you're really here to see wild nature, this is worth the extra driving and backtracking.

The cape is reached via a signed turnoff at the northern tip of the Cabot Trail, after you descend into the Aspy Valley. You'll soon come to **Cabot Landing Provincial Park,** where local lore claims that John Cabot first made landfall in North America in 1497. (We're still not sure, though.) Debate the issue amongst yourselves near the statue of Cabot, or take a long walk on the lovely 3km (2-mile) ochre-sand beach fronting the bay. The views of the remote coastline are noteworthy and camera-worthy.

The road then winds onward to the north; at a prominent fork, you can veer right to **Bay St. Lawrence,** if you wish, and find the tiny harbor and several summertime whale-watching outfits.

Family-owned ***Oshan*** **Whale Watch**'s (✆ **877/383-2883** or 902/383-2883; www.oshan.ca) thrice-daily tours on Captain Cyril Fraser's 13m (42-ft.) lobster boat cost C$25 per adult, C$20 senior and student, and C$12 per child from July through October. These folks can also take you deep-sea fishing (and clean your fish for cooking afterward). They're even on Twitter. (Sample entry: "On our 4:30pm whale watching tour we sighted 80 pilot whales . . .") **Captain Cox's Whale Watch** (✆ **888/346-5556** or 902/383-2981) costs more but also offers a different experience: Its whale-watching cruises are aboard an 8m (25-ft.) inflatable Zodiac craft, fully safety-certified, from mid-June through September. These tours cost C$45 adults (discounts for seniors) and C$25 per child, but require a four-person minimum; don't show up expecting a tour, unless you are four or more. Instead, call ahead to check on the status of tours.

From Bay St. Lawrence, go left at the fork in the road and continue along the stunning cliffside road to **Meat Cove**. The last 5km (3 miles) are along a dirt road that runs high along the shoulders of coastal mountains, then drops into shady ravines to cross brooks and rivers. The road ends at a rough-hewn settlement that's been home to hardy fishermen—seemingly all named McClellan—for generations.

There's a private campground here, **Meat Cove Camping** ★★ (✆ **902/383-2379**), with some of the most dramatic ocean and cliff views of any campground in Nova Scotia. It's open from June through September (sometimes into October); the two dozen campsites are unserviced, but there are hot showers, bathrooms, and firewood for sale. The sites cost C$25 per night. Several cabins on the same site cost C$60 a night, with the same knockout views and grills (bring your own blanket). Also ask the staff about hiking trails in the nearby hills above the campground (there's a day-use fee for non-campers). The campground is located at 2479 Meat Cove Rd., almost at the very end of the road.

Where to Stay

Four Mile Beach Inn ★ (Value) This rambling, interesting inn, which opened in the late 1990s, is one of the most interesting hotels on Cape Breton. Located in an old inn and former general store dating from 1898, it's run by innkeepers doing a superb job keeping pace with the ravages of time and weather, making it feel as comfortable as possible. Sometimes described as funky or eccentric, it's funky in a good way—if you can handle a few quirks. (Two rooms share a bathroom, while another has its bathroom across the hall, for instance; and you won't find flatscreen TVs or phones anywhere here.) The old general store has been spruced up and stocked with not-for-sale items; it's sort of like a little museum. An included breakfast is filling and tasty. The innkeepers also dispense great advice about local outings, and will rent you a kayak, canoe, or bike; a dirt road through the backyard leads right to the bay. Too tired for that? Hang out in the parlors chatting and playing cards, or just listening to the music that sometimes wafts through the place. This place offers good value for the money.

Moments Bay watch

The 8km (5-mile) trip from Bay St. Lawrence to Meat Cove is ideal for a mountain bike ride, if you thought to strap one to the top of your car. This is one of very few places in Canada where you can pedal and whale-watch at the same time—a terrific daily double, to be sure.

R.R. No. 1 (Box 3), Cape North, NS B0C 1G0. ✆ **888/503-5551** or 902/383-2282. www.fourmilebeachinn.com. 8 units. C$79–C$139 double. Rates include full breakfast. Packages available. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov to May. **Amenities:** Canoe, kayak, and bike rentals. *In room:* Kitchenette (some units), no phone.

Markland Cottage Resort ★ The Markland is sited on 28 hectares (70 acres) at a point where a meandering river meets a long sand beach fronting spectacular Aspy Bay. It's hard to imagine a more idyllic spot, especially in the morning when the sun illuminates mountains to the north. The property features two kinds of accommodations, both furnished in a simple, uncluttered style. Eleven one- and two-bedroom log cabins have kitchens, sitting areas, and porches—most with good views of the bay—and lots of pretty unvarnished wood, though some visitors complain these are getting a bit dated. Then there are a dozen more units, carved out of four other shared cottages. The Markland also hosts occasional performances and events at the **Octagon Arts Centre ★**, a lovely little performance space of wood beams and a high ceiling shaped like—well, you know; the Celtic Colours series touches down here each October. Yes, Virginia, they have Wi-Fi.

Cabot Trail, Dingwall, NS B0C 1G0. ✆ **800/872-6084** or 902/383-2246. Fax 902/383-2777. www.marklandresort.com. 23 units. C$99–C$200 double and cottage. Packages available. Children 16 and under stay free in parent's room. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-June. "Well-behaved pets" allowed. **Amenities:** Babysitting; bike rentals; canoes; outdoor pool. *In room:* A/C (some units).

Where to Dine

For inexpensive eats, check out **Angie's Family Restaurant** (✆ **902/383 2035**) in Cape North, serving a menu of pizzas and dependable local shellfish. There's also a local **cafe** in Bay St. Lawrence; a tiny **pizzeria** and **takeout fish** in Dingwall; and the seasonal **chowder house**—with a great view of the coast—in Meat Cove.

If you're in town during the height of summer, don't miss **Lobsterpalooza ★★** (✆ **902/270-3330;** www.lobsterpalooza.ca), which gets my vote for Best Named Festival

 of All Time. Events in the area include a June lobster supper (in North Bay) and a mid-July, week-long crab festival (in Bay St. Lawrence).

WHITE POINT & NEIL'S HARBOUR ★

From South Harbor (near Dingwall) you can drive on the speedy Cabot Trail inland to Ingonish, or stick to the coast along an alternate route that arcs past White Point, continues onward to **Neil's Harbour,** then links back up with the Cabot Trail.

If the weather's clear and dry, this **coastal road** ★★ is a far better choice. Bear left at **South Harbour** onto White Point Road. Initially, the road climbs upward amidst jagged cliffs with sweeping views of Aspy Bay; at **White Point** ★, you can veer a mile-and-a-half out to the tip of the land for even *more* dramatic views.

The road then changes names (to New Haven Rd.) and tracks inland before emerging at **Neil's Harbour** ★, a postcard-worthy fishing village of a few hundred souls. On a rocky knob located on the far side of the bay is a square red-and-white lighthouse (now an ice-cream parlor). From Neil's Harbour, it's just a 2-minute drive back to the Cabot Trail.

INGONISH ★

The Ingonish area includes a gaggle of similarly named towns—Ingonish Centre, Ingonish Ferry, South Ingonish Harbour—which collectively add up to a population of perhaps 1,300 or so (on a good day). Like Chéticamp on the peninsula's east side, Ingonish serves as a gateway to the national park and is home to a park visitor information center and a handful of motels and restaurants. There's really no critical mass of services in any one of the villages, though—instead, they're spread along a lengthy stretch of the Trail. So you never quite feel you've arrived in town. You pass a liquor store, some shops, a bank, a post office, a handful of cottages. And that's it—suddenly you're there, in the wild park.

Highlights in the area include a sandy beach (near Keltic Lodge) good for some chilly splashing around, and a number of shorter hiking trails. (See "Cape Breton Highlands National Park," later in this chapter.)

For golfers, the windswept **Highlands Links course** ★★★ (✆ **800/441-1118** or 902/285-2600; www.highlandslinksgolf.com)—adjacent to the Keltic Lodge (see "Where to Stay," below) but under completely separate management—is considered one of the best in Nova Scotia, if not all of Atlantic Canada. It's a 6,600-yard, links-style course with stupendous views and some stupendously difficult holes. Peak-season rounds cost about C$90 per adult (C$27 to C$45 for children); spring and fall rates are about C$20 lower, and twilight rates are also available. Ask about packages whenever booking a hotel room in the area, and be sure to reserve your tee time in advance—it's popular.

South of Ingonish, the **Cabot Trail** ★★★ climbs and descends the hairy 1,000-ft. promontory of Cape Smokey, which explodes into panoramic views from the top. At the highest point, there's a free **provincial park**—really little more than a picnic area and a trailhead—where you can cool your engines and admire the views. A 10km (6-mile) hiking trail studded with unforgettable viewpoints leads to the tip of the cape along the high bluffs.

Where to Stay

A number of serviceable cottage courts and motels are located in the area. (If you're booking by phone, be sure to find out *which* Ingonish you're staying in; the town names in this area all sound the same, which could create confusion.)

In addition to the choices below, **Glenghorm Beach Resort** in Ingonish (✆ **800/565-5660** or 902/285-2049) has about 75 units on a spacious 8-hectare (20-acre) property that fronts a sandy beach. Calling it a resort is a little bit of a stretch. Some rooms feature painted cinderblock walls and decor that's plain and a bit dated, though others feel a bit fresher and nicer. The expensive two-bedroom deluxe suite on the second floor is quite nice, though, featuring Jacuzzi tubs, kitchen units, and fireplaces. (Other suites are in a building out back, and aren't as nice.) Options include motel rooms and efficiencies, along with cottages and some elaborate suites. Prices are C$95 to C$129 for the motel rooms, C$115 to C$189 for the cottages, and C$195 to C$399 for one- and two-bedroom suites.

Castle Rock Country Inn The squat, two-story Castle Rock Country Inn sits boldly on a high hill overlooking Ingonish Harbor—a little too boldly, say some locals, who feel the inn's bulldozers altered their pristine view of the hillside flanking Cape Smokey. The exterior is whitewashed, shingled, and solidly basic, and rooms are surprisingly basic too—furnished the way you might expect rooms in a midrange business or chain hotel to be, with queen beds, armoires, and writing tables. Rooms facing north have outstanding ocean views, though they cost extra for the privilege. The inn's **dining room** ★ and patio have even more stunning water views; the kitchen serves a menu of updated traditional cuisine.

39339 Cabot Trail, Ingonish Ferry, NS B0C 1L0. ✆ **888/884-7625** or 902/285-2700. Fax 902/285-2525. www.ingonish.com/castlerock. 17 units. C$129–C$173 double. Rates include continental breakfast. Packages available. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, no phone.

Keltic Lodge Resort & Spa ★★ Kids Owned and operated by the province, the Keltic Lodge is reached after a dramatic drive through a grove of white birch trees and across an isthmus topping big cliffs. The vaguely Tudor-looking resort is also impressive at first glance, and the views are just extraordinary. Yet most rooms here remain furnished plainly, with run-of-the-mill motel-type furniture; you might expect more for the price. Some units are located in the more modern Inn at Keltic building a few hundred yards away. It has better views though a more sterile character. (Also, one reader wrote to lament the soundproofing in this annex, recommending an upstairs room to avoid hearing footfalls.) The cute log-cabinesque cottages are better, set among the birches—half with two bedrooms, half with four—but you'll need to share space with other travelers. If you rent one bedroom of a cottage, for instance, you'll share your living room with one to three other sets of guests; that may or may not be the sort of "resort" experience you wanted. Escape to the amazing Highland Links golf course (see above), a newish spa (with full treatments, yoga classes, and a hair salon), or the nice heated outdoor swimming pool (with one of the best pool views you can find anywhere in the province, I'd wager). Amenities like these somewhat compensate for the in-room inexperience. The resort is especially nice to young kids, too—free meals, bedtime snacks, and various programs and recreational offerings.

Food in the **Purple Thistle** ★★ dining room is among the best on the island; the fixed-price dinner menu—included with your rate—might run to prime rib or salmon filet and it has great views. Another restaurant, the **Atlantic,** serves lighter fare.

Middle Head Peninsula, Ingonish Beach, NS B0C 1L0. ✆ **800/565-0444** or 902/285-2880. Fax 902/285-2859. www.kelticlodge.ca. 105 units. C$175– C$442 double and cottage. Rates include breakfast and dinner. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed late Oct to late May. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; children's programs; golf course; outdoor pool; spa. *In room:* A/C (2 units), TV, fridge (some units), fireplace (some units), hair dryer, no phone.

ST. ANN'S

Traveling clockwise around the Cabot Trail, you'll face a choice when you come to the juncture of Route 312. One option is to take the side road to the **Englishtown ferry** and cross over St. Ann's Harbor in slow but dramatic fashion. The crossing of the fjordlike bay is scenic, and it only takes about 2 minutes (if there's no line—this is the province's busy "small" ferry). The ferry runs around the clock, for C$5 per car.

Your second option for making the Cabot Trail circuit is not to cross via ferry but rather to stay on the Trail, heading down along the western shore of St. Ann's Harbor.

One good launching point for exploring the waters is **North River,** where local guide/musician Angelo Spinazzola offers tours through his **North River Kayak Tours** (✆ **888/865-2925** or 902/929-2628) company from mid-May through mid-October. The full-day tour (C$109 per person) includes a steamed-mussel lunch on the shore; 3-hour tours cost C$64; and there's also a more expensive "romance tour" offered, where couples camp overnight on a remote beach—the owner cooks dinner, sets up a tent, and then departs for the night. Most every trip, claims Spinazzola, involves sightings of a bald eagle or two. Kayaks can also be rented (or even purchased) from the outfit.

In the village of St. Ann's, be sure to drop by the **Gaelic College of Celtic Arts and Crafts** (✆ **902/295-3411;** www.gaeliccollege.edu), located about a kilometer (⅔ mile) off the Trans-Canada Highway at exit 11. The school was informally founded in 1938, when a group of area citizens began offering instruction in Gaelic language in a one-room log cabin. Today, both campus and curriculum have expanded significantly, with classes offered in bagpiping, fiddle, Highland dance, weaving, spinning, and Scottish history, among other things.

The expansive, 142-hectare (350-acre) campus is home to the seasonally open **Great Hall of the Clans** ★, a museum where visitors can get a quick lesson in Scottish culture via interactive displays. Exhibits provide answers to burning questions like "What's the deal with the plaid?" and "What do Scotsmen really wear under a kilt?" Pretty impressive. Even better, one of poet Robert Burns's walking sticks is on display here, and you can buy one of the intriguing clan histories if you've got Scots blood running through your veins. The museum is very heavy on Gaelic music history, too.

The Hall is open daily in July and August, 9am to 5pm, Wednesday through Sunday only in June and September. Admission is C$7 per adult, C$5.50 for students, and C$20 for families. A crafts shop offers Gaelic souvenirs such as bolts of tartan plaid and CDs of traditional music. Live music performances happen from time to time; call or ask at the crafts shop for a schedule.

If you're driving from Ingonish south to St. Ann's during summer, be sure to drop by the Giant MacAskill Museum as well (see "One Giant Detour," below).

Where to Stay

Luckenbooth Bed & Breakfast Built in 1999, this modern, log-accented B&B has three guest rooms on 305m (a thousand feet) of wooded shore frontage. Guests get the run of several common areas, including a living room with a cozy fireplace and a basement-level TV room decorated in the clan tartans of genial owners Frances and Wayne McClure. Rooms each have modern furnishings. Try to book into no. 3 upstairs, with its hardwood floors, views of the bay, and a sitting area outside the door. (The other two units are in the basement, and feature cork floors.) There's a trail going down to the water for your daily walk, but the inn has a no-shoes-inside policy (slippers are furnished to guests) and a number of other rules—be prepared. Candlelight breakfast gets raves.

Moments One Giant Detour

If you happen to pass through Englishtown—it's about 64km (40 miles) south of Ingonish, on the way down to the middle "lobe" of Cape Breton Island—you can find one of Canada's most fascinating and Ripley-esque museums. I'm talking about the seasonal **Giant MacAskill Museum** (✆ **902/929-2925**) on Route 312. This museum honors the memory of local Scottish transplant Angus MacAskill, who lived here from 1825 to 1863 and gave new meaning to the term "living large." Angus, you see, was *huge*.

Supposedly MacAskill's father was of normal height, and Angus was a regular-sized baby, too. But when he hit adolescence, something went haywire: The boy shot up to 7 feet tall before he was even 20. At 7 feet 9 inches tall and 425 pounds, MacAskill is believed to have been perhaps the tallest natural giant who ever lived. According to the *Guinness Book of World Records,* he was the strongest man in recorded history. MacAskill's feats of strength—tipping over his fishing boat to drain water from it; lifting 1-ton anchors off a dock easily—are still legend, and he later made a successful go of it as owner of Englishtown's local general store. Angus was well-liked (he would have to have been), but caught a fatal infection during a trip to Halifax to purchase supplies and died a week later, not yet 40. He is buried nearby.

Children might enjoy sitting on MacAskill's massive chair (if they can reach it, that is) and trying on his sweater; the actual-size replica of the coffin MacAskill was buried in is simply astounding. The museum is open daily mid-May to September from 9am to 6pm. Admission is C$1 for adults, C75¢ for seniors and youth, and C50¢ for kids under 12.

50671 Cabot Trail (R.R. 4), St. Ann's, NS B0E 1B0. ✆ **877/654-2357** or 902/929-2722. Fax 902/929-2503. 3 units. C$120–C$140 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. *In room:* TV.

BADDECK

Although **Baddeck** (pronounced *Bah*-deck) is some distance from the national park, it's often considered the de facto "capital" of the Cabot Trail. That's not because the town is especially vibrant or fascinating; rather, it's partly because Baddeck is centrally positioned on the island, and partly because the main drag happens to offer more hotels, B&Bs, and restaurants than any other town on the loop. (That's how thinly populated it is up here.) There are also a clutch of practical services here you can't easily find on the Trail: grocery stores, Laundromats, gas stations, and the like.

Baddeck does have one claim to fame: For years, it was the summertime home of telephone inventor Alexander Graham Bell, now memorialized at a national historic site (see below). It's also a compact, easy town to explore by foot and is scenically located on the shores of big Bras d'Or (say bra-*door*) Lake. If you're on a tight schedule and plan to drive the Cabot Trail in just a day (figure on 6–8 hours), this might be the best place to bed down afterward, if only because it's on the way to Sydney and/or Louisbourg.

If, however, your intention is to spend a few days exploring the hiking trails, bold headlands, and remote coves of the Trail and the national park (which I certainly

 recommend), find an inn farther north; this town's single street can get claustrophobically packed with tourists and tour buses, and outside of Bell's home there's really little else to recommend doing here.

The friendly **Baddeck Welcome Center** (✆ **902/295-1911**) is located just south of the village at the intersection of routes 105 and 205. It's open daily from June through mid-October.

Exploring the Town

Baddeck is much like a modern New England village, skinny and centered around a single main street (called Chebucto St. rather than Main St.) just off the lake. You can ask for a free walking-tour brochure at the welcome center, although a complete tour of all the architectural highlights probably won't take you much more than 15 or 20 minutes.

Government Wharf (head down Jones St. from the Yellow Cello restaurant) is where you go for summer boat tours, the best way to experience Bras d'Or Lake up close. **Loch Bhreagh Boat Tours** (✆ **902/295-2016**), for one, offers thrice-daily sightseeing tours on a 13m (42-ft.) cruiser motorboat. They pass Alexander Graham Bell's palatial former estate and other attractions at this end of the lake. (Moonlight tours are available by arrangement, if you've got a big enough group together.)

About 180m (200 yards) offshore is **Kidston Island** ★, owned by the town of Baddeck. It has a wonderful sand beach with lifeguards and an old lighthouse to explore. The local Lion's Club offers frequent pontoon boat shuttles across St. Patrick's Channel, warm and clear weather permitting; the crossing is free, but donations are encouraged.

Alexander Graham Bell National Historic Site ★★ Kids Each summer for much of his life, Alexander Graham Bell—of Scottish descent, but his family emigrated to Canada when he was young—fled the heat and humidity of Washington, D.C., for this hillside retreat perched above Bras d'Or Lake. The mansion, still owned and occupied by the Bell family, is visible across the harbor from various points around town. Today it's part homage, part science center. The modern exhibit center highlights Bell's amazing mind; you'll find exhibits on his invention of the telephone at age 29, of course, but also information about other projects: ingenious kites, hydrofoils, and airplanes, for instance. Bell also invented the metal detector—who knew? Science buffs will love the place, and most visitors are surprised to learn Bell actually died in this home. (He's buried on the mountaintop.) Then there's an extensive "discovery" section, where kids are encouraged to apply their intuition and creativity to science problems. All in all, it's a very well-thought-out attraction—and attractive, too.

Chebucto St., Baddeck. ✆ **902/295-2069.** Admission C$7.80 adults, C$6.55 seniors, C$3.90 youth age 6–16, C$20 families. June daily 9am–6pm; July to mid-Oct daily 8:30am–6pm; May and mid- to late Oct daily 9am–5pm. Late Oct to Apr by appointment only.

Where to Stay

There are lots of choices in and around Baddeck, but none really jumps out head-and-shoulders above the rest. If the places below are booked, you could just as easily try **Auberge Gisele's Inn,** 387 Shore Rd. (✆ **800/304-0466** or 902/295-2849), a nicely modern 75-room hotel that's open May to late October and popular with bus tours; regular rooms cost C$115 to C$150, upgraded rooms and suites run from C$140 up as high as C$300 (with fireplace and Jacuzzi). There's also the cost-effective **Cabot Trail**

Motel (✆ **902/295-2580**) on Route 105 about a mile west of Baddeck, with 38 motel units and four chalets overlooking the lake, a nice little heated outdoor pool, and private saltwater beach. Its rates run from C$95 to C$125 per night.

Green Highlander Lodge The Green Highlander is located atop the Yellow Cello, a popular eatery on Baddeck's main drag. The three rooms here are decorated in a sort of gentleman's fishing camp motif, quite simple but pleasing. Rooms are named after Atlantic salmon flies; Blue Charm has a private sitting room and blue-quilted twin beds, while all three have private decks with views looking out toward Kidston Island. Ask about moonlight paddle trips, kayak rentals, and the private beach located 2km (a mile) away. The inn also manages a cottage nearby, hewn in unvarnished wood paneling with a kitchenette and propane grill for al fresco cookery on the deck.

525 Chebucto St. (Box 128), Baddeck, NS B0E 1B0. ✆ **866/470-5333** or 902/295-2303. Fax 902/295-1592. www.greenhighlanderlodge.com. 3 units. C$90–C$120 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov to Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant, kayak rentals. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Inverary Resort This sprawling property, located on 5 lakeside hectares (12 acres) within walking distance of town, is a potential option for families with active kids—but it's not a luxe "resort," and it's not a smiley-staff sort of place. Activities run the gamut from fishing and paddleboats to bonfires on the beach; sports fans will enjoy the volleyball, tennis, and shuffleboard courts. Guest rooms and facilities are spread around well-maintained grounds, mostly in buildings painted dark brown with white trim and green roofs. These rooms vary in size and style, but most are good enough—even the snug motel-style units in the two-bedroom cottages (a few have kitchens). Rooms are gradually being upgraded, and flatscreen televisions seem to be filtering in, a good sign. The boathouse is a popular gathering place (events take place there), and the resort operates two dining rooms: A cafe overlooking the marina serves informal fare, including various pastas, plus a more formal dining room serves classier food on a sun porch.

368 Shore Rd. (P.O. Box 190), Baddeck, NS B0E 1B0. ✆ **800/565-5660** or 902/295-3500. Fax 902/295-3527. www.capebretonresorts.com. 138 units. C$99–C$189 double; C$159–C$390 suite. Packages available. MAP plans available. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed Dec–May. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; pub; bikes; Jacuzzi; playground; indoor pool; room service; sauna; spa; 3 tennis courts; watersports equipment. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchenette (some units).

Telegraph House ★ Rooms in this 1861 hotel on Baddeck's main street are divided between the original building, an annex of motel units on a hill behind it, and a set of cabins. This is actually where Alexander Graham Bell stayed when he first visited Baddeck. (Oddly enough, rooms here *don't* have phones; what would Bell think?) The bigger motel rooms in back are fairly charmless, but do have small decks with glimpses of the lake; some of the newest rooms in the main lodge now have lovely polished wood floors and whirlpool baths; you can even stay in Bell's room, a Victorian space of flowery wallpaper print. The cottages are quite small, yet they're as brightly furnished as a child's playroom, and come with air-conditioning and whirlpool tubs. The dining room serves breakfast plus straightforward lunches and dinners of meat, fish, fowl, and huge desserts. Fiddle and piano music sometimes fill the inn, and guests can linger on the front or side porches.

479 Chebucto St. (P.O. Box 8), Baddeck, NS B0E 1B0. ✆ **888/263-9840** or 902/295-1100. Fax 902/295-1136. www.baddeck.com/telegraph. 41 units. C$75–C$125 double; C$100–C$225 cottage. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C (some units), TV (some units), Jacuzzi (some units), no phone.

Where to Dine

In addition to the listings below, many of Baddeck's hotels and inns have their own dining rooms. **Auberge Gisele's** dining room (see above) features Continental cuisine, for instance, though bus tours often feed here. At the Inverary Resort (see above), the aptly named **Lakeside Cafe** is a popular spot with a view of the marina and a moderately priced menu; the resort's main dining room features more creative (and more expensive) fare. And **Silver Dart Lodge** on Shore Road (✆ **902/295-2340**) has the informal **McCurdy's.**

Baddeck Lobster Suppers Overrated SEAFOOD This no-frills restaurant has the charm of a Legion Hall and charges an arm and a leg, but tourist crowds chow down here every summer nonetheless. You might want to, too. The lobster dinner—everyone orders it—is only available from 4 to 9pm, and includes a smallish steamed lobster, all-you-can-eat mussels, chowder, biscuits, dessert, and soda. Beer and wine cost extra and can push the bill for a family into the "expensive" range. Not in the mood for lobster? There's also cedar-planked salmon and a cold ham plate (but nobody orders that). A kids' menu is also available, and you can order smaller meals—lobster rolls, a bowl of chowder, even pizza or a hot dog—during the lunch hour only.

Ross St. ✆ **902/295-3307.** Reservations accepted for groups of 10 or more. Lobster dinner C$30; lunch items C$5–C$9. MC, V. Daily 11:30am–1:30pm and 4–9pm. Closed Nov–May.

Yellow Cello Café PUB FARE Despite its arty name, this eatery located inside the Green Highlander Lodge (see "Where to Stay," above) is a pubby, family-restaurant sort of place, not a gourmet lunchery. (It began as a takeout pizza joint.) If you don't set your culinary expectations too high, it's a decent spot to grab a bite. Angle for a seat outdoors under the awning facing the street: There are two decks, each featuring the work of Maritime painter David Stephens. The menu will be familiar to those who watch a lot of sports on TV; it consists mostly of pizza, pasta, nachos, chili, and sandwiches. They also serve basic, hearty breakfasts in the morning.

525 Chebucto St. ✆ **902/295-2303.** Reservations suggested during peak season. Main courses C$7–C$12. AE, MC, V. May–Oct daily 8am–11pm.

BRAS D'OR LAKE

With so much beauty on Cape Breton Island, Bras d'Or Lake hardly gets noticed by travelers. That's amazing; almost anywhere else in the world, Bras d'Or—a vast inland sea that's so big it nearly cleaves the island in two—would be a major tourist attraction ringed by motels, boat tour operators, water parks, and chain restaurants. But today, along the twisting shoreline of this 112km (70-mile) saltwater lake, you find—well, next to nothing. Yes, roads circumnavigate the whole lake, but there are few services for tourists because there are few tourists. Is this good or bad? It just depends on your outlook.

Bras d'Or is a difficult lake to characterize, since it changes dramatically from one area to the next—wild and rugged in some parts, pastoral and tamed in others. Wherever you go on the lake, though, keep an eye peeled for the regal silhouettes of **bald eagles** ★★★ soaring high above the water (or for a telltale spot of bright white in the trees, indicating a perching eagle). Dozens of eagle pairs nest along the lake's shores or nearby, making this one of the best places in Canada for observing eagles in their natural habitat.

Exploring Bras d'Or Lake

What's a good strategy for touring the lake? For starters, I would caution against trying to drive around it in 1 day—or even 2 days. There's no equivalent to the Cabot Trail

tracing the lake's outline. The circumnavigating road serves up breathtaking views from time to time, but much of the route frankly is on the dull side, running some distance from the lake's shore and offering little more than views of scratchy woods.

It's far better to pick one or two small sections of the lake and focus on those; fortunately, I have already done the grunt work of sussing out the best routes for you (see "Three for the Road: Lakeside Drives," below).

On the southeastern shore is the historic little town of **St. Peter's** ★, where the lake comes within 800m (900 yards) of breaking through to the Atlantic Ocean and splitting Cape Breton into two half-islands. There's evidence this neck of land was settled as early as the 16th century by Portuguese. Later the French used it strategically for shipping out timber—it was known as Port Toulouse at that time. Still later, the British built a fort and the town grew by leaps when Loyalists began fleeing America.

Nature couldn't quite manage to split the mass up here, but humans did it when they built **St. Peter's Canal** in 1854. This canal still operates, and you might see some pretty impressive pleasure craft making their way up-canal to the lake. The pathway along the canal makes for a good walk, too.

The village of **Marble Mountain** ★, on the lake's southwestern shore, is hard to find but offers an intriguing glimpse into island history. (If you intend to come here, get a *good* local map of the island first, then take the back roads from **Dundee, West Bay,** or **Orangedale.**) Believe it or not, this town was briefly a little metropolis. In 1868 a beautiful seam of marble was discovered here, and by the early 20th century full-scale mining operations were digging it out and sending it to builders and craftsmen around the world as fast as they could. At its peak, the quarry employed 750 miners, and the town was home to a thousand or more souls.

Now the marble has played out, though, and the village has reverted to form: a sleepy backwater. You can glimpse the scar of the former mine (which offers great views over the lake) by car or on foot from town (ask a local for directions), and there's a **beach** right in town with scenic swimming. The beach looks like it features pure white sand from a distance, but it isn't: It's made up of marble chips washed down from the old quarry.

If you're hungry, pop into the **Cape Breton Smokehouse** ★ (✆ **902/756-3332**), a family eatery that smokes its own salmon and also serves beef, chicken, and even buffalo steaks. It's about 8km (5 miles) north of the village, on the main road (Marble Mountain Rd.).

Also worth a quick detour is **Isle Madame** ★—which is actually a group of small islands—just south of the lake off Route 104 and Route 4 as you return west from St. Peter's to the island's "entrance" at Port Hawkesbury. This region is almost entirely French-speaking (though they speak English too, of course). Drop by a local bakery or restaurant for a croissant or other local treat.

Highland Village Museum ★ Kids Highland Village is located outside Iona, on a grassy hillside with sweeping views over the lake. When you finally turn your back on the great panorama, you'll find a good living history museum. This 16-hectare (40-acre) village features a set of buildings reflecting the region's Gaelic heritage, some of them actual historic structures relocated here from elsewhere on the island and some of them quite impressive replicas. Inside, they contain rug-hooking tools, furniture, old Celtic music scores, info on the Gaelic language, and many more artifacts. Poke through the (ca. 1790) Black House, a stone-and-sod hut of the sort an immigrant would have lived in prior to departing Scotland, or the schoolhouse and general store, which date from the 1920s. Staffers dressed in historical costumes are happy to answer your (or your kids')

Moments

Three for the Road: Lakeside Drives

Bras d'Or Lake is huge and scenic—in fact, that's the problem. It's simply *too* big (and too hard to see from most roads) to be worth the trouble of circumnavigating. I don't know anyone who's ever done it. So what's a traveler to do? Take the lake piece by piece, that's what. Here are my picks for the three best short sections of Bras d'Or to tour by car when you're pressed for time:

- Drive the stretch of quiet shoreline that begins in **Iona** and hugs the St. Andrews Channel on **Route 223;** if you're headed to **Sydney,** go this way as far as **Barrachois.** It's about a 40km (25-mile), 45-minute ride—longer if you stop awhile at the good **Highland Village Museum** (see p. 153).
- Another nice section is the hump of land that rises and falls between **Dundeed** and **St. Peter's,** which runs attractively over hill and dale. There are two or three different ways you can go; each takes about a half-hour.
- A third segment is the stretch of **Route 4** that heads northeast from **St. Peter's** to **East Bay,** running along the eastern arm of the lake as it narrows to a point. You'll get the very best views of the lake from this route, and the best sense of its surprisingly vast size. You'll also pass little coves, a famous tea room (see "Where to Dine," below), and even a native Canadian reserve (at **Chapel Island**). This is a longer haul—about 64km (40 miles)—but the road is mostly straight and quick, and it'll very likely take you less than an hour to traverse.

questions about island life in the early days. It's worth spending at least an hour, more if you've got a group of kids keenly interested in history.

4119 Hwy. 223, Iona, NS B2C 1A3. ✆ **866/442-3542** or 902/725-2272. http://museum.gov.ns.ca/hv. Admission C$9 adults, C$7 seniors, C$4 children 6–17, C$22 families. June to mid-Oct daily 9:30am–5:30pm. Closed mid-Oct to May.

Where to Stay

Highland Heights Inn ★ Value Highland Heights is a well-enough managed motel, with clean, well-maintained rooms—just what you want, sometimes. But it's also different from nearly every other little motel on the island in one critical respect: the views. Every room has a view of the lake bordering on the spectacular. And second-floor rooms cost a little more, but they're worth the splurge because they all have balconies from which you can watch the lake in all its shifting moods. (These rooms are also a bit larger and brighter.) All the motel's units have fans and windows that open, plus TVs and phones—you don't always find these things in rural Nova Scotian lodgings. The motel's dining room is cheerful and sunny in a '70s sort of way (apropos, since the inn was built in 1972), with lake views from some tables. It's open daily and features home cooking, including excellent chowder.

Hwy. 223, Iona, NS B2C 1A3. ✆ **800/660-8122** or 902/725-2360. Fax 902/725-2800. www.highlandheightsinn.ca. 32 units. C$80–C$109 double. Ask about multinight packages. DISC, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Where to Dine

Rita's Tea Room ★ (Finds) CAFE Singer/songwriter Rita MacNeil grew up in Big Pond, and she never forgot her roots during her rise to fame. She always told audiences to stop by for a cup of tea if they were in the neighborhood. Problem was, they did. So Rita opened a tearoom for her fans, housing it in a converted 1939 schoolhouse. Today it contains a thriving gift shop (offering the music of Rita but also others), plus a comfortable dining room where you can buy baked goods, sandwiches, and soups—with tea, of course. Rita herself periodically shows up for meet-and-greets with her fans here, about a half-dozen times each summer. The teas and sweets are great.

Hwy. 4, Big P ond (about 25 miles south west of S ydney). ✆ **902/828-2667.** Snacks, soups, and sandwiches C$7–C$14, afternoon tea sets C$10–C$12. V. Late June to mid-Oct daily 10am–6pm. Closed mid-Oct to late June.

SYDNEY

The province's third-largest city (pop. 30,000) was northern Nova Scotia's industrial hub for decades, and three out of four Cape Breton Islanders still live in or around Sydney. Recent economic trends have not been kind to the area, however, and the once-thriving steel mills and coal mines are quiet now. So this gritty port city has thus been striving to reinvent itself as a tourist destination, though with limited success—partly because Cape Breton's natural wonders offer such tough competition for your tourodollar.

Although its commercial downtown is a bit bland, some of Sydney's residential areas might appeal to architecture and history buffs. Three early buildings are open to the public in summer, all within easy walking distance of one another. Spend a few hours visiting the trifecta if you're a fan of old buildings.

The **Cossit House Museum,** 75 Charlotte St. (✆ **902/539-7973**), is Sydney's oldest standing house, built in 1785 and now carefully restored and furnished with a fine collection of 18th-century antiques. It's open from June through mid-October, Monday through Saturday from 9am to 5pm and Sunday from 1pm. Admission costs C$2 for adults, C$1 for seniors and children age 6 to 17.

The **Jost Heritage House,** 54 Charlotte St. (✆ **902/539-0366**), was built in 1787 and had a number of incarnations in the intervening years, including service as a store. It's open June through August Monday through Saturday from 9:30am to 5:30pm, Sunday from 1:30pm; hours are shorter during the fall. Highlights of the home include an early apothecary. Admission costs C$2 per person.

The handsome **St. Patrick's Church,** 87 Esplanade (✆ **902/539-1572**), locally known as "St. Pat's," is the island's oldest Roman Catholic church and dates to 1830. It's suitably impressive, made of rugged stone. From June through Labour Day, a **museum** in the church opens daily from 9:30am to 5:30pm.

Puffin Stuff

Looking for something you can't see anywhere else (almost)? Thirty minutes west of Sydney (just off the Trans-Canada Hwy. en route to St. Ann's or Baddeck) is the home port of **Bird Island Boat Tours ★** (✆ **800/661-6680;** www.birdisland.net). On a 2¾-hour narrated cruise you'll head out to the Bird Islands, home to a colony of around 300 nesting puffins. You'll get within 18m (60 feet) of the colorful endangered birds (which nest in grassy burrows above rocky cliffs); you may also see razorbills, seals, guillemots, and the occasional eagle. Three tours are offered daily from mid-May through August,

though the timing varies by day; cost of the tours is C$37 for adults, C$15 for children 7 to 12, and reservations are suggested.

The same outfit also maintains a campground and some rental cottages in the area. To find directions to the landing, check the website.

An Underground Tour

Northeast of Sydney is the town of **Glace Bay,** a former coal-mining center. The mines have slipped into an economic twilight, but the province made lemonade from lemons by creating the surprisingly intriguing **Cape Breton Miners' Museum** ★★ at 42 Birkley St. (✆ **902/849-4522;** www.minersmuseum.com). The museum provides some background on the geology of the area, and offers insight into the region's sometimes-rough labor history. But the highlight of the trip is the 20-minute descent into the mine itself (for an extra charge), with damp walls and cool, constant temperatures. Retired miners lead the tours, because they can tell you what it was like to work here better than anyone else. One reader reported two teenaged sons were all groans and eye rolls when she announced this destination—but came away in awe of the place afterward. Plan to spend at least an hour here.

Admission is C$6 adults, C$5 children for the museum, and then an additional C$6 adults or C$5 children if you want to take the mine tour. The museum is open daily from June through October, 10am to 6pm (Tues until 7pm Jul–Aug), but weekdays only the rest of the year from 9am to 4pm. There's also a restaurant on premises.

Where to Stay & Dine

Gowrie House Country Inn ★★★ Located across the harbor from Sydney, only a few minutes' drive north of the Newfoundland ferry, Gowrie House is resplendent yet comfortable, historic yet up-to-date. Parts of the inn were built in 1820, but the building has since been expanded and festooned with Oriental carpets, Asian ceramics, Regency furniture, modern art, and great touches of local history like a ship's table from a former Bras d'Or mailboat. It's a really nice place—a bit frilly and over the top, perhaps, but even the smallest units here are more spacious than the biggest ones at most other inns. And the price is quite affordable. Especially nice is the expensive Caretaker's Cottage, with its own small deck, garden, French doors, and double whirlpool tub. Four large units in the modern Garden House are almost as good; they're carpeted and airy, with microwaves and refrigerators. In the main inn, the apartment (room 6) is a little more modern-looking, with art, goblets, and a whirlpool tub. It's only too bad this inn is so far from the best parts of the island. Still, the whole summer is sometimes booked up by mid-June; call well in advance if you want to come. The dining room ★ serves excellent prix fixe dinners of regional cuisine, though they're city-priced—upwards of C$50 per person, plus tax and tip.

840 Shore Rd., Sydney Mines, NS B1V 1A6. ✆ **800/372-1115** or 902/544-1050. www.gowriehouse.com. 11 units. C$145–C$175 double; C$265 cottage. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. Closed Jan–Mar. Pets allowed with advance notice. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units), hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units), kitchenette (some units), no phone.

LOUISBOURG ★★

Louisbourg, on Cape Breton's remote and windswept easternmost coast, was once one of Canada's most impressive French settlements. Despite its brief prosperity and durable construction, the colony basically disappeared after the British forced the French out (for the second and final time) in 1760. Through the miracle of archaeology and historic

reconstruction, much of the imposing settlement has now been re-created, and today this is among Canada's most ambitious national historic parks.

However, a visit does require some effort. Being 35km (22 miles) east of Sydney means this attraction isn't on the way to anyplace else, and it's a very long and inconvenient detour from the National Park. So it's easy to justify skipping it. But if you're interested in local history, make the trip. For the right kind of traveler, a few hours spent wandering the wondrous rebuilt town and then walking among ruins and along the coastal trail could be one of the highlights of a trip to eastern Canada.

Exploring the Village

The hamlet of Louisbourg—which you pass through en route to the historic park—is low-key. A short **boardwalk** with interpretive signs runs along the town's tiny waterfront. (You'll get a glimpse of the historic site across the water.) Nearby is a cool faux-Elizabethan theater, the **Louisbourg Playhouse** ★ (✆ **902/733-2996;** www.louisbourgplayhouse.com), at 11 Aberdeen St. The playhouse was originally built near the old town by Disney for the movie *Squanto.* After production wrapped, Disney donated it to the village, which dismantled it and moved it to a side street near the harbor. Various performances and concerts are staged here throughout the summer.

One fun summer event here is the **Race Through Time,** a mid-August 13km (8-mile) road race that takes runners right into the heart of Old Europe—er, Louisbourg. Nothing like the sight of the old gallows to get the blood pumping.

As you come into town on Route 22, you'll pass the **Sydney and Louisbourg Railway Museum** (✆ **902/733-2720**), which shares the gabled railway depot with the local **visitor information center** (same phone). The museum commemorates the former railway, which shipped coal from the mines to Louisbourg harbor between 1895 and 1968. You can visit some of the old rolling stock (including an 1881 passenger car) and view the roundhouse. It's open daily from mid-May through mid-October; in July and August, from 8am to 8pm, and in spring and fall from 9am to 5pm. Admission is free. There's a gift shop here, as well.

Since you're already here, you might detour a few additional miles out of your way to **Lighthouse Point** ★, the site of Canada's very first lighthouse. (The lighthouse you see there today is a replacement version, however.) The rocky coastline at this spot is quite dramatic and undeveloped, and open—no trees. It's a great spot for a little hike, a picnic, and some photographs. Look sharp for Havenside Road (the access road to the lighthouse), which diverges from the main paved road near the visitor information center/railway museum in the center of town. You might pass lobstermen at work on the way.

Fortress of Louisbourg National Historic Site ★★ Kids Though it feels like the end of the world today, the village of Louisbourg has had three lives. The first was early in the 18th century, when the French colonized the area aggressively and built a stone fortress—imposing but not impregnable, because the British captured it in 1745. The fort was returned to the French following negotiations in Europe. War soon broke out again, however, and the British recaptured it in 1758 (and blew it up for good measure). That appeared to be the end, but the Canadian government decided to recreate about a quarter of the stone-walled town in the 1960s, based on a few documents about what had been there. The park is built to show life as it might have been in 1744, as an important French military capital and seaport that had not yet been captured; you arrive at the site after walking through an interpretive center and taking a short bus ride. (Keeping cars at a distance definitely enhances the historic feeling.) After walking through an

 impressive gatehouse—complete with costumed guard on the lookout for English spies—you can wander narrow lanes and poke through the faux-historic buildings, some of which contain informative exhibits, others furnished with convincingly worn reproductions. Chicken, geese, and other barnyard animals peck and cluck away, and vendors hawk freshly baked bread from wood-fired ovens. It really does feel like old Europe. Ask for the free tour, and don't hesitate to question the costumed guides; come in June or October, and your cost is 60 percent less to compensate for the weather. Allow at least 4 hours for the experience.

Louisbourg, NS. ✆ **902/733-2280** or 733-3546. June –Sept admission C$18 adult, C$15 seniors , C$8.80 children, C$44 families; May and Oct admission discounted 60%. July–Aug daily 9am–5:30pm; mid-May to June and Sept to mid-Oct daily 9:30am–5pm. Limited services last 2 weeks of May and last 2 weeks of Oct. Closed Nov to mid-May.

Where to Stay

Cranberry Cove Inn ★★ You can't miss this attractive in-town inn en route to the fortress: it's the three-story Victorian farmhouse painted cranberry red. Inside, it's decorated in a light Victorian motif. Upstairs rooms are carpeted and furnished on themes. Anne's Hideaway is the smallest, but has a nice old tub and butterfly collection; Isle Royale is done up in Cape Breton tartan patterns. The quirky Field and Stream room comes with a twig headboard, mounted deer head, and stuffed pheasant. Meals in the dining room match the inn's exterior—the included breakfast sprinkles cranberries into the mix. Dinner is served nightly (only to guests who have paid for package deals) in a handsome first-floor dining room of polished wood floors and cherry furniture. Entrees could range from charbroiled salmon to cranberry-marinated chicken. Note that, due to the three-story open staircase, this inn really isn't suitable for those with toddlers.

12 Wolfe St., Louisbourg, NS B1C 2J2. ✆ **800/929-0222** or 902/733-2171. www.louisbourg.com/cranberrycove. 7 units . C$105– C$160 double . Rates include full breakfast. Meal plans available. MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units).

Louisbourg Harbour Inn Bed & Breakfast ★★ This yellow clapboard inn is just a block off Louisbourg's main street and overlooks the fishing wharves, harbor, and fortress. The lovely pine floors within are nicely restored, and guest rooms are tidy and attractive and well thought out. (Six of the eight units face the ocean, while five have Jacuzzis.) Some are fussier than others—expect busy floral bedspreads—but all of them are comfortable. The best rooms are probably on the third floor, up the stairs; room no. 6 is bright and cheerful, while room no. 7 is spacious and boasts a handsome wooden bed and a pair of rockers overlooking the fish pier. Both have Jacuzzis. Rooms 1 and 3 have private balconies (and Jacuzzis), as well.

9 Lower Warren St., Louisbourg, NS B1C 1G6. ✆ **888/888-8466** or 902/733-3222. 8 units. C$110–C$180 double. Rates include breakfast. MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-June. *In room:* Fridge (some units), Jacuzzi (some units), no phone.

Where to Dine

Louisbourg has a handful of informal, family-style restaurants. For more casual eating out, hit **The Grubstake** at 7499 Main St. (✆ **902/733-2308**), open mid-June to early October from noon to about 9pm. The place was founded by a few friends in 1972, and ever since it has embraced the philosophy that food should be fresh and honest. Expect straightforward steaks, pastas, pork, burgers, and an array of seafood (the house specialty).

There's also the **Lobster Kettle,** locally and touristically popular, at 41 Commercial St. (✆ **902/733-2723**). It's just what you'd expect: an emphasis on lobsters, chowder, and broiled fish, everything done well enough.

12 CAPE BRETON HIGHLANDS NATIONAL PARK ★★★

Cape Breton Highlands National Park is one of the two crown-jewel national parks in Atlantic Canada (Gros Morne in Newfoundland is the other; see p. 277). Covering nearly 1,000 sq. km (370 sq. miles) and stretching across a rugged peninsula from the Atlantic to the Gulf of St. Lawrence, this park is famous for its starkly beautiful terrain. It also features one of the most dramatic coastal drives in North America: think Big Sur, but greener. One of the great pleasures of this park is that it holds something for everyone, from tourists who prefer to sightsee from the comfort of their cars to those who prefer backcountry hiking in the company of bear and moose.

The mountains of Cape Breton are probably unlike those you're familiar with elsewhere. The heart of the park is fundamentally a huge plateau; in the vast interior, you'll find a flat, melancholy landscape of wind-stunted evergreens, bogs, and barrens. This is called the "taiga," a name that refers to the zone between tundra and the northernmost forest. In this largely untracked area (Nova Scotia's largest remaining wilderness), you might find 150-year-old trees that are still only knee-high.

It's the park's edges that really capture your attention, though. On the western side of the peninsula, the tableland has eroded right into the sea, creating a dramatic landscape of ravines and ragged, rust-colored cliffs pounded by the ocean. The **Cabot Trail** ★★★, a paved road built in 1939, winds dramatically along the flanks of these mountains, offering extraordinary vistas and camera shots at every turn. On the park's eastern flank—the Atlantic side—the terrain's a bit less spectacular, but those lush green hills still offer a backdrop that's exceptionally beautiful.

Note that this section of the book focuses only on the park proper, which offers *no* lodging or services other than campgrounds. You can find limited lodging and restaurants in the handful of villages that ring the park, however. See the previous section, which begins on p. 135, for detailed information about local inns and hotels in the various towns (such as Cheticamp and Ingonish) near the park's boundaries.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Access to the park is via the **Cabot Trail,** which is very well marked by provincial signage. The entire loop is about 305km (190 miles), though the section that passes through the national park—from the entrance at Chéticamp to the one at Ingonish—is only about 105km (65 miles). You'll drive slowly to take in the vistas. Although the loop can be done in either direction, I would encourage you to drive it in a clockwise direction; the visitor center in Chéticamp offers a far more detailed introduction to the park.

VISITOR INFORMATION Two **visitor information centers** are located at either end of the park, in **Chéticamp** and **Ingonish.** Both are open daily from mid-May through mid-October, 8am to 8pm in summer (Jul–Aug) and 9am to 5pm during the shoulder seasons. The Chéticamp center has much more extensive information about the park, including a slide presentation, natural history exhibits, a cool large-scale relief map, and

 a very good bookstore specializing in the natural and cultural history. The park's main phone number is ✆ **902/224-2306.**

FEES Entrance permits are required from mid-May through mid-October and can be purchased either at information centers or at tollhouses at the two main park entrances. Permits are required for any activity along the route, even stopping to admire the view. Daily fees are C$7.80 adults, C$6.80 seniors, C$3.90 children age 6 to 16, and C$20 families. If you'll stay in the vicinity of this park for a week or more, buy an **annual pass,** which saves you money; the yearly pass is about C$98 for families, about C$39 per adult. Or buy an all-Canada National Pass (see "The Great Outdoors," p. 64).

EXPLORING THE PARK

Scenic Drives

Cape Breton Highlands National Park basically only offers one drive, but it's a doozy: With few exceptions, it's jaw-droppingly scenic along nearly the entire route. The most breathtaking stretch is probably the 40km (25-mile) section from **Chéticamp to Pleasant Bay** ★★★ along the island's northwestern coast. Budget lots of extra time for driving this part, because you'll want to spend plenty of time at the pullouts gawking at the views, reading signs, and snapping digital photos. Other drivers will poke along, too. If you have time, there's even a nice little detour at the northern apex of the loop to **Meat Cove;** see "Cape North," earlier in this chapter, for details.

If it's a foggy day, though, save yourself the entrance fee and time. Without the views, there's little reason to drive the loop and you'd be smart to wait for a day when the fog has lifted. Explore villages near your hotel in the atmospheric mist instead.

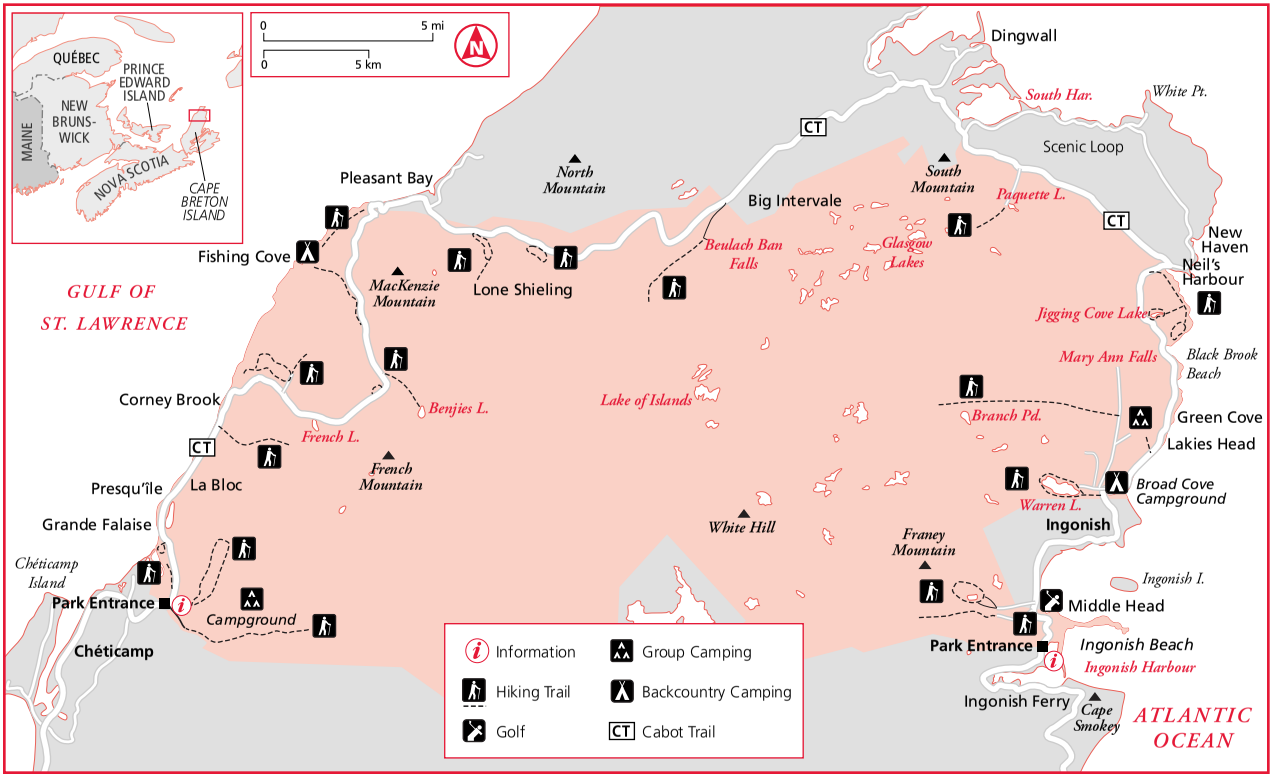
Hiking

The park offers no fewer than 25 distinct hiking tracks departing from the Cabot Trail. Many excursions are quite short and have the feel of a casual stroll rather than a vigorous tramp, but those determined to get a workout will find suitable trails, too. All the trails are listed, with brief descriptions, on the reverse side of the map you get when you pay your park entry fee at the gates.

The **Skyline Trail** ★★★ offers oodles of altitude and views, without the climbing. You ascend a tableland from Chéticamp by car, then follow a 9km (6-mile) loop out along dramatic bluffs and through wind-stunted spruces and firs. A spur trail descends to a high, exposed point overlooking the surf; it's capped by blueberry bushes. Moose are often spotted along this trail, though it's a very popular trek for visitors and thus often

Tips Check Your Brakes

You need to be *very* confident about your car's brakes before setting out on the **Cabot Trail.** That's because the road rises and falls steeply, with considerable drama; cresting some ridges, you might even feel a mild sense of vertigo. Especially stressful on the brakes (when traveling the Trail clockwise) are the descents to Pleasant Bay, into the Aspy Valley, and off Cape Smokey. Test your brakes and check your tires long *before* you get close to the park—don't wait until you're flying down a scenic hill, eyes off the road, and a big RV suddenly backs out into your path.


QUÉBEC
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South Har.
White Pt.
Scenic Loop
CT
Pleasant Bay
North Mountain
Big Intervale
South Mountain
Paquette L.
CT
New Haven
Neil's Harbour
Fishing Cove
Beulach Ban Falls
Glasgow Lakes
MacKenzie Mountain
Lone Shieling
Jigging Cove Lake
Mary Ann Falls
Black Brook Beach
GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE
Corney Brook
Benjies L.
Lake of Islands
Branch Pd.
Green Cove
Lakies Head
CT
French L.
French Mountain
Presqu'île
La Bloc
Broad Cove Campground
Warren L.
Grande Falaise
White Hill
Ingonish
Franey Mountain
Chéticamp Island
Ingonish I.
Park Entrance
Campground
Middle Head
Chéticamp
Park Entrance
Ingonish Beach
Ingonish Harbour
Ingonish Ferry
Cape Smokey
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Information
Group Camping
Hiking Trail
Backcountry Camping
Golf
CT Cabot Trail

crowded. ***Note:*** At press time, this trail was closed to the public after a hiker was mauled to death on the trail by two rogue coyotes in October of 2009. Police called the incident "very irregular," as coyotes are normally very skittish and avoid humans at almost any cost. Check with park staff about the trail's status.

Farther along the Cabot Trail, **Lone Shieling** ★ is an easy 800m (½-mile) loop through lush hardwood forest in a valley that's home to 350-year-old sugar maples. The re-created hut of a Scottish crofter (shepherd) is another cool feature of this trail.

If you're looking to leave the crowds behind, the **Glasgow Lakes Lookoff** ★ is a relatively gentle 9km (6-mile) round-trip hike that takes you through barrens and scrubby forest to a rocky bald overlook with distant views of the ocean and some highland lakes. This trail is alternately swampy and rocky, so wear rugged footwear.

On the eastern shore, try the 4km (2½-mile) **hike to Middle Head** ★★, which starts beyond the Keltic Lodge resort. This dramatic, rocky peninsula thrusts well out into the Atlantic. The trail is wide and relatively flat, and you'll cross open meadows with wonderful views both to the north and south. The tip of the peninsula is grassy and open, a good spot from which to watch for passing whales—or see waves crashing in after a storm. Allow about 2 hours for a relaxed walk out to the point and back.

Biking

The full 290km (180-mile) **Cabot Trail loop** ★★★ is the ironman tour for bike trekkers, both arduous and rewarding. The route twists up ravines and plummets back down toward the coast. One breathtaking vista after another unfolds, and the plunging, brake-smoking descent from Mt. MacKenzie to Pleasant Bay is one serious cyclists aren't likely to forget in a lifetime. Campgrounds and motels are well spaced out here, too, making a 3- or 4-day excursion easy. Disadvantages? The road is almost uniformly narrow and free of shoulders, so you'll be battling constantly with errant motor-home drivers for the side of the road. That can be a bit harrowing.

If you're not inclined to pedal the entire loop, pick and choose. Especially scenic stretches for bikers in good shape include the sections from **Chéticamp to Pleasant Bay** ★★ and back and the climb and descent from **Lone Shieling eastward to the Aspy Valley** ★★.

Note that mountain bikes are allowed on just a few trails within the park—check with the visitor center when you arrive for details about any new restrictions. The longest backcountry trail is the 13km (8-mile) route into the **Lake of Islands** ★, which doesn't appear on all the maps. Ask about it at one of the park's visitor centers.

CAMPING

The park has five drive-in campgrounds. The largest are at **Chéticamp** (on the west side) and **Broad Cove** (on the east), both of which have the commendable policy of never turning a camper away; even if all regular sites are full, they'll still find a place for you to pitch a tent or park your RV. All these campgrounds are well run and well maintained, though Chéticamp and Broad Cove have the most facilities, including three-way hookups for RVs.

Rates run from around C$18 to C$38 per night, depending on the level of services you require, time of year, and the campground you've selected. Remember that you're also required to buy park entry (or have a park pass in hand) when camping at Cape Breton, and that you can only make advance reservations at Chéticamp, where half the sites are set aside for advance bookings using the website **www.pccamping.ca**. At all the

other campgrounds, it's first-come, first-served. Winter camping is allowed in some park campsites, as well, for a flat fee of C$15.

The park also has a stunning **backcountry campsite at Fishing Cove** ★★, set on a pristine, scenic cove. It's an 8km (5-mile) hike into the site from your car, and there's no potable drinking water once you arrive; pack enough in. (No campfires are allowed there, either.) Once there, however, you can watch for pilot whales at sunset from the cliffs to your heart's content. The site costs C$9.80 per night; make arrangements at one of the visitor information centers.

6 New Brunswick

For whatever reason, New Brunswick isn't usually considered a top priority when first-time travelers begin hatching plans to visit the eastern provinces. Even within Canada, the province is as well known for its pulp mills, industrial forests, cargo ports, and refineries (Irving Oil is based here) as for its cute villages, high tides, fresh air, or friendly locals.

And to foreigners? The place is mostly confused with the same-named city in New Jersey. Either that, or it's viewed as a place to be driven through as quickly as possible en route to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Rest assured, though: New Brunswick *does* have pockets of wilderness and scenic beauty that equal those anywhere in eastern Canada, and plenty of great cultural offerings. (FDR was crazy about the place.) This province's appeals are just a bit less obvious than those of, say, Cape Breton.

So you'll need to do a little homework before heading there, but if you do, you can definitely cobble together a number of fun excursions taking in the province's variegated landscapes. You can lounge in surprisingly warm ocean waters lapping up on sandy beaches that hold their own to anything Prince Edward Island's got to offer. You can shutterbug it on rocky, surf-pounded headlands that look like the far shores of Newfoundland. You can gape at huge tides that will stun the kids with their drop and power. You can even browse through a chocolate museum (which must be the best idea for a museum by anyone, anywhere, ever).

You could also make time to explore a salty, pubby maritime city, Saint John, that makes a nice run at copying Halifax's mix of arts, culture, beer, and a busy working harbor.

Some weather-numbers watchers claim this province has the warmest summers and sunniest winters in the country, on average—and the provincial tourism commission has been all too eager to jump on these stats as proof that there's something magical here. But I think that's missing the point. I don't think they need to reach so far.

My advice is just this: Go explore New Brunswick beyond the highways, beyond the first glance. Do that, and you'll find it to be a place full of lovely landscapes, friendly locals, and fun things to do.

1 EXPLORING NEW BRUNSWICK

Here's a bit of advice: It's important to come to New Brunswick with a strategy already in hand, one that takes into account geography and driving times. That's because the key tourist attractions here aren't close to each other at all, and there are no superspeedways to get you from one to the next quickly. You'd hate to spend most of your vacation looking out the window of a car.

If you're drawn to rugged beauty, plan to focus mostly on the **Fundy Coast** with its stupendous dropping tides, rocky cliffs, and boreal landscape. This part of the coastline actually feels a lot more remote and northerly than the more densely settled (and tamer-looking) northeastern coast.

Those who want to sip a pint to the strains of traditional music, shop at a great farmer's market, or visit a museum or gourmet restaurant? Swing through **Saint John** and its lovely associated fishing towns instead. Those interested in Franco history or sandy beaches, on the other hand, should keep moving and drive north to the **Gulf of St. Lawrence,** which brings Acadian heritage, seafood, whale-watches, and a laid-back feel to the table.

Those simply interested in hurrying *through* the province to get to Prince Edward Island or Nova Scotia? Well, you've paged to the wrong chapter of this book. Take at least a day to detour through Fundy National Park to see **Cape Enrage** and **Hopewell Rocks**—two of among eastern Canada's most dramatic attractions. If nothing else, you'll be able to tell your friends that New Brunswick should never again be written off on any tour of eastern Canada.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION New Brunswick publishes several free annual directories and guides that are helpful in planning a trip to the province, including the comprehensive *Experience New Brunswick* vacation planner listing attractions, accommodations,

campgrounds, and adventure packages, as well as the official New Brunswick travel map. Contact the **New Brunswick Department of Tourism and Parks,** P.O. Box 12345, Campbellton, NB E3N 3T6 (✆ **800/561-0123;** www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca).

The province staffs six official visitor information centers; more than 50 cities, towns, and villages also have their own municipal information centers. A complete listing of phone numbers for these centers can be found in the *Experience New Brunswick* guide, or look for "?" direction signs on the highway. Phone numbers and addresses for the appropriate visitor information centers are provided in each section of this chapter.

GETTING THERE **By Car and Ferry** The Trans-Canada Highway bisects the province, entering from Québec at St. Jacques. It follows the Saint John River Valley before veering through Moncton and exiting into Nova Scotia at the hamlet of Aulac. The entire distance is about 530km (329 miles).

The fastest route from New York City or New England to New Brunswick is the Maine Turnpike (a toll road). Take the turnpike north to Bangor, Maine, then slice east on Route 9 to connect to Route 1. Continue to Calais, Maine which is just across the river from **St. Stephen,** New Brunswick.

A more scenic variation is to drive across a bridge onto **Campobello Island** from Lubec, Maine (see the "Passamaquoddy Bay" section, below), then take a ferry to Deer Island, drive the length of the island, and board a second ferry to the mainland.

Those headed to **Fredericton** or **Moncton** can speed their trips somewhat by following the Maine Turnpike to its conclusion, then continuing north on I-95 all the way to Houlton, Maine, and beyond; you'll connect with the Trans-Canada after crossing the border.

Bay Ferries (✆ **888/249-7245;** www.nfl-bay.com) operates the ferry known as the *Princess of Acadia* that links **Saint John** with Digby, Nova Scotia. The ferry sails year-round, with one to two crossings daily (travel time: 3 hours) each way. The peak-season (June through October) one-way fares in 2009 were C$40 for adults, C$30 for seniors, C$25 for children ages 6 to 13, C$5 per child under 6, and C$80 and up per vehicle, plus a C$20 fuel surcharge; fares are cheaper during the rest of the year. Also, adults and kids get a 25% discount on round-trips completed within 30 days (vehicle fare is discounted 15%), so be sure to buy a round-trip ticket if you'll return the same way you came. Reservations for the ferry in summer are advised.

By Air The province's main airports are at Fredericton (the provincial capital), Saint John, and Moncton, all of which are chiefly served by **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) and the major car-rental companies. **Continental** (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com) also flies nonstop from Newark, New Jersey's, Liberty International Airport to Moncton, while **WestJet** (✆ **888/937-8538;** www.westjet.com) links Saint John and Moncton with Toronto.

By Train Canada's government-operated cross-country railroad, **VIA Rail** (✆ **888/842-7245;** www.viarail.ca), offers train service through the province to and from Montréal 6 days a week (no departures on Tues) year-round. The train follows a northerly route to and from Halifax, with stops in **Campbellton, Miramichi,** and **Moncton.** Check the VIA Rail website for more details on routes, schedules, stopping times in New Brunswick, and online booking. Also see p. 32 in chapter 3 for more details on pricing of seats on the overnight train.

By Cruise Ship Yes, indeed, you read that correctly. Popular **Carnival Cruise Lines** (✆ **888/CARNIVAL;** www.carnival.com) is just one of the major cruise lines to touch down in New Brunswick, with a series of 4-day weekend summertime cruises from New

York City to the Bay of Fundy and back. Optional shore excursions during the day and night at port in Saint John (for an extra charge) have included a bike tour of local covered bridges; visits to a dairy farm; kayak trips around the bay; and a visit to a local Brewery. Other big cruise lines also stop in this port—see the Saint John tourism website **www.cruisesaintjohn.com** for fuller listings and links to cruise-booking sites.

2 THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The province has put together a well-conceived campaign to encourage visitors of all budgets to explore its outdoor attractions and activities. The provincial travel guide outlines dozens of multiday and day adventures ranging from a C$10 guided hike at Fundy National Park to fancy biking packages that include overnight inn accommodations and gourmet dinners. For more information on these programs, call the tourism department at ✆ **800/561-0123** or check the official website of the province's parks at **www.nbparks.ca**.

Readers who really want to see the wild should think about visiting the outdoor center at **Cape Enrage** (see the "Fundy National Park" section later in this chapter), where one can canoe, rappel, rock-climb, and/or kayak—all in the same dramatic coastal setting.

BACKPACKING Among the best destinations for a backcountry hike in this province are **Mount Carleton Provincial Park** (p. 215) and **Fundy National Park** (p. 199), both of which maintain backcountry campsites for visitors. The two landscapes are quite different to hike through, however—see the appropriate sections for more information on each park, then take your pick.

BICYCLING The islands and peninsulas of **Passamaquoddy Bay** lend themselves nicely to cruising in the slow lane—especially Campobello Island (p. 170), which also has good dirt roads for mountain biking. **Grand Manan** (p. 179) holds lots of appeal for cyclists, too, even if the main road (Rte. 776) has some rather narrow shoulders and some pretty quick local drivers. Some of the best coastal biking is around **Fundy National Park**—especially the back roads to Cape Enrage and the **Fundy Trail Parkway,** an 11km (7-mile) multi-use trail that hugs the coast west of the national park. Along the Acadian Coast, **Kouchibouguac National Park** has limited but unusually nice biking trails through mixed terrain (and rentals are available right in the park).

A handy guide is *Biking to Blissville,* by Kent Thompson. It covers 35 rides in the Maritimes and costs C$15, plus tax and shipping. Look in local bookshops, check online, or contact the publisher directly: Goose Lane Editions, 500 Beaverbrook Ct., Suite 500, Fredericton, NB E3B 5X4 (✆ **888/926-8377** or 506/450-4251; www.gooselane.com).

BIRD-WATCHING **Grand Manan** is the province's most notable destination for birders, right on the Atlantic flyway. (The great John James Audubon lodged here while studying and drawing bird life more than 150 years ago.) Over the course of a typical year, as many as 275 species could be observed on the island; September is often the best month for sightings. Boat tours from Grand Manan can also take you farther out to **Machias Seal Island,** with its colonies of puffins, Arctic terns, and razorbills. It's fun to swap information with other birders, too; during the ferry ride, look for excitable folks with binoculars and floppy hats dashing from one side of the boat to the other and back.

Campobello Island's mixed terrain attracts a good mixture of birds, including the sharp-shinned hawk, common eider, and black guillemot. Ask for a checklist and map at

the visitor center. Shorebird enthusiasts also flock to **Shepody Bay National Wildlife Area,** which maintains preserves in the mudflats between **Alma** (near the entrance to Fundy National Park) and Hopewell Cape. There's good birding in the marshes around **Sackville,** near the Nova Scotia border, too.

CANOEING New Brunswick has some 3,500km (2,175 miles) of inland waterways, plus countless lakes and protected bays. Canoeists can find everything from glass-smooth waters to daunting rapids. In Kouchibouguac National Park, for example, there's a rental and tour concession based at **Ryans Recreational Equipment Rental Centre** (✆ **506/876-8918**), open from mid-May to mid-September (open weekends from mid-May to mid-June and the final week of the season). More experienced canoeists looking for a longer expedition should head for the **St. Croix River** along the U.S. border, where you can embark on multiday paddle trips and get lost in the woods—so to speak.

FISHING The **Miramichi River** has long attracted anglers lured by its wily Atlantic salmon. Some experts consider it to be among the best salmon rivers on the planet, even if diminished runs have plagued recent years (as they have all rivers in the Maritimes). There are strict laws regarding river fishing of the salmon: The fish must be caught using flies, not hooks, and nonresidents must hire a licensed guide when fishing for them. (There's an exemption from this rule, the so-called Fish New Brunswick Days in early June, when you don't need to use a guide but still need a license; check ahead with your lodging if you are interested.) For other freshwater species, including bass, as well as open-ocean saltwater angling, the rules are less restrictive. Get up to date on the rules and regulations by requesting two brochures: "Sport Fishing Summary" and "Atlantic Salmon Angling." These are available from the **Fish and Wildlife Branch** of the Department of Natural Resources, reached by phone at ✆ **506/453-2440** or by snail mail at P.O. Box 6000, Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1. The Department's information can also be found online—parked at the memorable (not!) website address **www.gnb.ca/0254**.

GOLF In St. Andrews, the **Algonquin hotel**'s redesigned golf course is a beauty—more than 100 years old, it was retouched by Donald Ross' plans in the 1920s, then rethought and expanded in the late 1990s—easily ranking among eastern Canada's top 10. That's right: It's behind the big-name stars on Cape Breton Island and Prince Edward Island. The course now features 9 newer inland holes (the front 9), in addition to the 9 original seaside holes that become increasingly spectacular as you approach the point of land separating New Brunswick from Maine. All 18 of them are challenging, so bring your "A" game. Service and upkeep are impeccable, and there's both a snack bar on premises and a roving club car with sandwiches and drinks. Greens fees are C$49 to C$99 for 18 holes (carts extra; discount at twilight time). Lessons are offered, and there's a short-game practice area with a huge putting green in addition to the usual driving range. Call ✆ **888/460-8999** or 506/529-8165 for tee times and other details. In Fredericton, lovely **Kingswood** (✆ **800/423-5969** or 506/443-3333; www.kingswoodpark.com/golf.php)—located inside a family entertainment park—was recognized by *Golf Digest* as the best new Canadian golf course in 2003. It features 27 holes, a par-3 course, and a double-ended driving range. A round of 18 holes costs C$54 to C$69.

HIKING The province's highest point is on top of **Mount Carleton Provincial Park** (✆ **506/235-0793**), in the center of a vast area of woodlands far from all major population centers. Several demanding hikes in the park yield glorious views. The park's open daily from mid-May through mid-October and costs C$7 to enter; you get there either by following Route 17 from **Campbellton** or taking various local roads (routes 105, 108,

and then 385, to be specific) from the border crossing at Limestone, Maine. This should take less than 3 hours from either Campbellton or Caribou, Maine. There's also superb hiking at **Fundy National Park,** with a mix of coastal and woodland hikes on well-marked trails. The multi-use, 11km (7-mile) **Fundy Trail Parkway** ★★ has terrific views of the coast and is wheelchair-accessible. **Grand Manan** ★ is also a good destination for independent-minded hikers who enjoy the challenge of *finding* the trail as much as they enjoy hiking itself.

An excellent resource is *A Hiking Guide to New Brunswick* by Marianne Eiselt, published by Goose Lane Editions. It's C$17 and is available in bookstores around the province, online, and directly from publisher Goose Lane Editions (✆ **888/926-8377;** www.gooselane.com).

SEA KAYAKING The huge tides that make kayaking so fascinating along the **Bay of Fundy** also make it exceptionally dangerous—even the strongest kayakers are no match for these fierce ebb tides if they're in the wrong place. Fortunately, a number of skilled sea-kayaking guides work the province.

Among the most extraordinary places to explore in New Brunswick is **Hopewell Rocks.** At high tide, there are plenty of sea caves and narrow channels to explore. **Baymount Outdoor Adventure** (✆ **877/601-2660** or 506/734-2660), run by the Faulkners in Hillsborough, offers 90-minute sea kayak tours of Hopewell Rocks from June through early September for C$55 adults, C$45 children, or C$180 per family.

Other good kayak outfitters along the coast include **FreshAir Adventure** (✆ **800/545-0020** or 506/887-2249) in Alma (near Fundy National Park) and Bruce Smith's **Seascape Kayak Tours** (✆ **866/747-1884** or 506/747-1884) down in Deer Island (with an amazingly international staff).

SWIMMING Parts of New Brunswick offer surprisingly good ocean swimming. The best beaches are mostly along the "Acadian Coast," especially near the town of **Shediac** and within **Kouchibouguac National Park.** If you're coming to this province with plans to swim, bear in mind that the water is much warmer (and the terrain more forgiving) along the Gulf of St. Lawrence than it is in the frigid, rocky Bay of Fundy—though you've got to be realistic. It's not going to be as balmy as, say, the water in Florida.

WHALE-WATCHING The **Bay of Fundy** is rich with plankton, and therefore rich with whales. Some 15 types of whales can be spotted in the bay, including finback, minke, humpback, the infrequent orca, and the endangered right whale. Whale-watching expeditions sail throughout the summer from various docks, wharves, and ports including Campobello Island, Deer Island, Grand Manan, St. Andrews, and St. George. Any visitor information center can point you in the right direction; the province's travel guide also lists lots of tours, which typically cost around C$40 to C$50 for 2 to 4 hours of whale-watching.

3 PASSAMAQUODDY BAY

The **Passamaquoddy Bay** region is often the first point of entry for those arriving overland from the United States. The deeply indented bay is wracked by massive tides that produce currents powerful enough to stymie even the sturdiest fishing boats. It's a place of deep fogs, spruce-clad islands, bald eagles, and little development. Fortunately for you, it's also home to a grand old summer colony and a peninsula that boasts two five-star inns and a rambling turn-of-the-20th-century resort.

CAMPOBELLO ISLAND ★★

Campobello is a compact island (about 16km/10 miles long and 5km/3 miles wide) at the mouth of Passamaquoddy Bay. It's connected by a graceful modern bridge to Lubec, Maine, and is much easier to get to from the United States than from Canada. (To get here from the Canadian mainland without driving through the United States requires two ferries, one of which operates only during the summer.) This is a great quick trip into Canada if you're already in Downeast Maine; from Bar Harbor, Maine, it's about a 2½-hour drive—into another world that feels a century or more older.

Campobello has been home to both humble fishermen and wealthy families over the years, yet both have coexisted quite amicably. (Locals approved when the summer folks wanted to build a golf course, for example—because it gave them a nice place to graze their sheep.) Today, the island is a mix of elegant summer mansions and simpler local homes.

Campobello offers excellent shoreline **walks** ★ at both **Roosevelt Campobello International Park** (see below) and **Herring Cove Provincial Park** (✆ **506/752-7010**), which opens from late May until mid-October. The landscapes are extraordinarily diverse. On some trails you'll enjoy a Currier & Ives tableau of white houses and church spires across the channel in Lubec and Eastport; 10 minutes later you'll be walking along a wild, rocky coast pummeled by surging waves. Herring Cove's thousand or so acres include a mile-long beach that's perfect for a slow stroll in the fog; camping (see "Where to Stay & Dine," below) and a good golf course with a pro shop. Watch for bald eagles and osprey, too.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Campobello Island is accessible year-round from the United States. From Route 1 in Whiting, Maine, take Route 189 to Lubec, then cross the free **FDR International Bridge** from the mainland onto Campobello.

In summer only, there's a second fun option, although it will cost you. From **St. George** on the Canadian mainland, drive down Route 172 to the dock at **L'Etete.** Board the free **provincial ferry** that runs year-round (operates on the half-hour 7am to 5pm, hourly until 10pm) to **Deer Island**'s northern tip. Then drive the length of that island to Cummings Cove—it's only about 24km (15 miles or 20 minutes' drive)—and board the small ferry to Campobello. This second ferry is operated by **East Coast Ferries** (✆ **877/747-2159** or 506/747-2159; www.eastcoastferries.nb.ca) from late June through September, running once per hour from 8:30am to 6:30pm. The ride takes about a half-hour. The fare is C$16 for a car and driver, plus C$3 for each additional passenger and a small fuel surcharge (currently C$2). You can later retrace your steps for another C$16, or just drive on across the border into Maine. Remember: these ferry times are in local Atlantic time, one hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Campobello Welcome Center,** 44 Rte. 774, Welshpool, NB E5E 1A3 (✆ **506/752-7043**), is on the right side just after you cross the bridge from Lubec. It's usually open from mid-May until early September, 9am to 7pm, then from around 10am until 6pm through mid-October.

Roosevelt Campobello International Park ★★

This free park in Welshpool, on Rte. 774 (✆ **506/752-2922;** www.fdr.net), is truly international, run by a commission with representatives from both the U.S. and Canada. It offers scenic coastlines, 14km (9 miles) of walking trails on 1,130 hectares (2,800

acres)—and tons of history, thanks to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's still-looming presence here. Like any number of affluent Americans, FDR's family made annual treks to this prosperous summer colony to experience cool air and presumed near-magical powers of restoration. ("The extensive forests of balsamic firs seem to affect the atmosphere of this region, causing a quiet of the nervous system and inviting sleep," reported one 1890 real-estate brochure.) The future U.S. president came to this island every summer between 1883 and 1921, when he was stricken with polio. Franklin and his siblings spent those summers exploring the coves and sailing around the bay, and he later always recalled his time here fondly. (His phrase "beloved island" still gets no rest in local advertising.) You'll learn a lot about Roosevelt and his early life both at the visitor center, where you can watch a short film, and during a self-guided tour of his family's elaborate mansion, which is still covered in cranberry-colored shingles. For a "cottage" this big, it's surprisingly comfortable and intimate.

The park's visitor center closes down in late October until mid-May, but the extensive grounds and parklands remain open year-round sunrise to sunset; maps and walk suggestions are available at the visitor center. From Mid-May to September the center is open daily from 10am to 6pm; the last tour leaves 15 minutes before closing. This is easily worth half a day.

Where to Stay & Dine

There's camping at **Herring Cove Provincial Park** (✆ **506/752-7010**). Nightly fees at the 88 sites range from C$22 (for a simple site) to C$35 (for a rustic shelter to somewhat protect you from the elements) with discounts for seniors. For indoor options, see below.

Lupine Lodge ★ (Value) (Kids) In 1915, cousins of the Roosevelts built this handsome compound of log buildings not far from the family cottage. A busy road runs between the lodge and the water, but the buildings are located on a small rise and have the feel of being removed from traffic. Guest rooms are in two long lodges adjacent to the main building and restaurant. The rooms with bay views cost a bit more but are worth it—they're slightly bigger and furnished in a more rustic style. All units have queen beds (some rooms add a double bed or fireplace) plus access to a deck overlooking the bay. You won't find phones, TVs, luxe bathrooms, or wireless Internet here, but you will find a pleasing vibe—they welcome even small children, and will pack a lunch for your explorations. The lodge's attractive **dining room** is a good place for a meal, exuding summer with its log walls, double stone fireplace, views of fishing fleets on the bay, and mounted moose and swordfish. Three meals are served daily (blueberry pancakes are great at breakfast), and dinners have been improved: Entrees now include choices like maple-glazed salmon, pasta, and a turkey dinner, in addition to the longtime favorites such as steak, seafood, lobster rolls, and lobster stew.

610 Rte. 774, Welshpool, Campobello Island, NB E5E 1A5. ✆ **888/912-8880** or 506/752-2555. www.lupinelodge.com. 11 units. C$100–C$180 double. MC, V. Closed mid Oct–late May. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* No phone.

Owen House, A Country Inn & Gallery This three-story clapboard captain's house dates from 1835 and sits on 4 tree-filled hectares (10 acres) at the edge of the bay. First-floor common rooms are decorated in a Victorian manner, with Persian and braided carpets and mahogany furniture; watch the water from a nautical-feeling sun room that has big windows. The guest rooms are a mixed bag, furnished with a mixture of antique and modern furniture. Some units are bright and filled with salty air (room no. 1 is biggest and most expensive, with waterfront views on two sides and attractive antiques such

as a cane chair and an iron-frame bed). Others are simpler, dark, or tucked beneath stairs. The four third-floor rooms share two bathrooms—the innkeepers can assign one of the bathrooms privately to room nos. 7 or 8 for an extra charge—but they also have excellent views. Bedspreads are frumpy, while the wooden floors are handsome.

11 Welshpool St., Welshpool, Campobello Island, NB E5E 1G3. ✆ **506/752-2977.** www.owenhouse.ca. 9 units, 4 with shared bathroom. C$104–C$210 double. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. No children under 6 in Aug. *In room:* No phone.

ST. STEPHEN

St. Stephen is the Canadian gateway for many travelers arriving from the United States. It's directly across the tidal St. Croix River from Calais, Maine, and the two towns share a symbiotic relationship—it's a local call across the international border from one town to the other, fire engines from one country sometimes respond to fires in the other, and during an annual summer parade, bands and floats have marched right through customs. Though downtown St. Stephen is not a destination, it is a handy pit stop—and the smell of chocolate (as you'll read below) does attempt to entice you into a longer stay.

Essentials

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Provincial Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **506/466-7390**) is open daily from 9am to 8pm in summer (mid-June to Labour Day), 9am to 6pm during the shoulder seasons (first 2 weeks of June and last 3 weeks of Sept). It's in the old train station at Milltown Boulevard and King Street, about a mile from Canadian customs—turn right after crossing the border (follow signs toward St. Andrews and Saint John), watching for the information center at the stoplight where the road turns left.

Exploring St. Stephen

St. Stephen is a town in transition. The lumber industry and wood trades that were responsible for all those handsome brick and stone buildings along main street have mostly dried up. The town now depends on its paper mill, a large Ganong chocolate factory, and pass-through tourists like you for its economic mainstays. As a regional commercial center, St. Stephen has a gritty, lived-in feel to it, though there's not much in the way of stylish shopping or restaurants to keep you here more than a moment. (For the truly cocoa bean–obsessed, though, there is a small chocolate festival here in summer.)

If you're so inclined, you can learn more about the town's and region's history through a brief stop at the **Charlotte County Museum** (✆ **506/466-3295**), in a handsome mansard-roofed home at 443 Milltown Blvd. quite close to the tourist office (see above). Besides information about the chocolate factory—who knew Ganong may have invented both the candy bar and the heart-shaped candy box?—you can learn about the city's formerly impressive cotton mill (which was the second largest in Canada in its heyday) and soap factory. It's open June through August only, daily from 9:30am until 4:30pm.

The Chocolate Museum ★ (Kids) St. Stephen's supposed claim to fame is that it's the home of the chocolate bar: the place someone first thought to wrap chocolate pieces in foil and sell them individually, in 1910. Chocolate is still big around here—not as big as it is in Hershey, Pennsylvania, but still a huge part of the local psyche and economy. The Ganong brothers began selling chocolate from a general store here in 1873, and from there an empire was built, employing up to 700 workers by the 1930s. This was the first place to package chocolates in heart-shaped boxes for Valentine's Day, and it still makes 30% of all Canadian Valentine chocolates. The modern plant on the outskirts of town isn't open to the public, but this museum opened in 1999 is in one of the company's

original factories, a large brick structure on the main drag. Exhibits explain about 19th-century chocolate boxes; there are interactive multimedia displays about the candymaking; and the kids can play games like "Guess the Center" (I always get them wrong). One real highlight here is watching the expert hand-dippers make chocolates the old-fashioned way—samples are available afterward. Need more? Ganong's Chocolatier, an old-fashioned candy shop, is located in the storefront adjacent to the museum—pick up some discounted bags of factory seconds. There's also a "Heritage Chocolate Walk" offered, which combines a factory tour with a walk through downtown's historic areas. The museum was to unveil a new expansion in 2009; plan to spend an hour or more here if you're coming.

73 Milltown Blvd. ✆ **506/466-7848.** www.chocolatemuseum.ca. Admission C$7 adults, C$6 students and seniors, C$4 children under 5, C$18 families. Downtown tour plus museum C$13 adult, C$10 seniors children under age 5, C$30 families. July to Aug Mon–Sat 9:30am–6:30pm, Sun 11am–3pm; June and Sept Mon–Sat 10am–4pm; Oct-Nov Mon–Fri 10am–4pm.

ST. ANDREWS ★★

The village of St. Andrews—or St. Andrews-by-the-Sea, as the chamber of commerce persists in calling it—traces its roots back to a bunch of Loyalists. After the American Revolution, New Englanders who supported the British in the struggle needed a new life. They landed first at seaside Castine, Maine, which they thought was safely on British soil. But it wasn't; the St. Croix River was later determined to be the true border between Canada and the United States. Forced to uproot once more, these Loyalists dismantled their homes, loaded the pieces aboard ships, and rebuilt them on the welcoming peninsula of St. Andrews (not so far away from Castine, by water). And you know what? Some of these remarkably resilient saltbox houses *still* stand in the town today.

The community later emerged as a fashionable summer resort in the 19th century, when many of Canada's affluent built homes and gathered annually here for social activities. The Tudor-style Algonquin hotel (now known as the Fairmont Algonquin) was built in 1889 on a small rise overlooking the town and quickly became the area's social hub and defining landmark.

St. Andrews is beautifully situated at the tip of a long, wedge-shaped peninsula. Thanks to its location off the beaten track, this village hasn't been spoiled much by modern development, and walking the wide, shady streets—especially around the Algonquin—reminds one of a simpler time, as do hundreds of century-old homes in the town. A number of appealing boutiques and shops are spread along Water Street on the town's shoreline, and it's easy to grab a boat tour on the docks, too. I definitely recommend this town if you're seeking a tame, easy touristic dip into New Brunswick. Also don't miss the weekly farmer's market, held Thursday mornings in summer on the waterfront.

Essentials

GETTING THERE St. Andrews is located at the apex of Route 127, which dips southward from Route 1 between St. Stephen and St. George. It's an easy drive north from **St. Stephen** or south from **Saint John** (but more scenic coming from Saint John); the turnoff is well marked from both directions.

In case you don't have wheels, **Acadian Bus Lines** (✆ **800/567-5151;** www.acadianbus.com) runs one daily bus between St. Andrews and Saint John; the trip takes less than 90 minutes, and the adult one-way fare is C$25, C$43 round-trip. Even better, the bus line offers discounts to children, students, and seniors.

VISITOR INFORMATION St. Andrews' seasonal **Welcome Centre** (✆ **800/563-7397** or 506/529-3556) is located at 46 Reed Ave., on your left as you enter the village. Look for the handsome 1914 home overarched by broad-crowned trees (which is also home to the local **Chamber of Commerce**). The center opens daily from mid-May through mid-October; the rest of the year, contact the Chamber at the same address or by calling ✆ **506/529-3555.**

Exploring St. Andrews

The local chamber of commerce produces two brochures, a town map and directory, and the St. Andrews-by-the-Sea historic guide, all of which are free. Also look for *A Guide to Historic St. Andrews,* produced by the St. Andrews Civic Trust. Many of the private dwellings in St. Andrews even feature plaques with information on their origins—look for them especially on the sides of the town's saltbox-style homes.

The village's compact and handsome downtown flanks **Water Street,** the long commercial street paralleling the bay. You'll find understated commercial architecture here, much of it from the turn of the 20th century, in a variety of styles. Allow an hour or so for browsing through the boutiques and art galleries. There's also a mix of restaurants and inns.

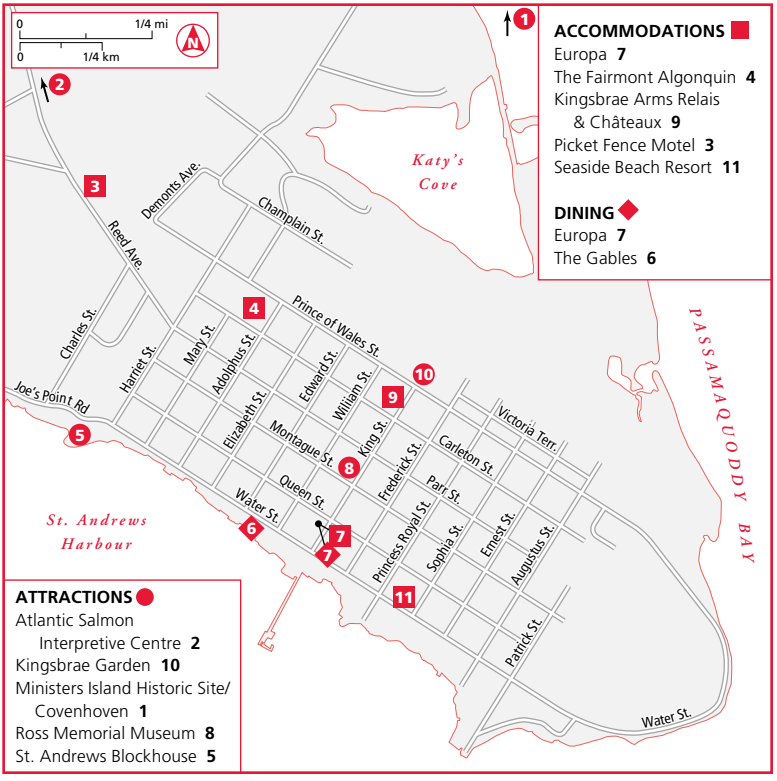
Two blocks inland on King Street, get a dose of local history at the **Ross Memorial Museum** ★, 188 Montague St. (✆ **506/529-5124**). This brick Georgian mansion was built in 1824; in 1945, it was left to the town by American reverend Henry Phipps Ross and his wife Sarah Juliette Ross, who only lived there 7 years before dying within days of each other. The house was full of their eclectic and intriguing collection of period furniture, carpets, and paintings—and it has remained that way. The museum is open June through mid-October, Monday through Saturday from 10am to 4:30pm. Admission is by donation—leave a few dollars. Just uphill from the museum, at the head of King Street, is the steadily growing **Kingsbrae Garden** (see below).

Toward the western end of Water Street, you'll come to Joe's Point Road at the foot of Harriet Street. The stout wooden **blockhouse** that sits just off the water behind low grass-covered earthworks was built by townspeople during the War of 1812, when the colonials anticipated a U.S. attack (which never came). This structure is almost all that remains of the scattered fortifications created around town during that war—well, there are cannons here, too—but it's in pretty good shape, and has good bay views, too. The fortification is administered to visitors as the **Blockhouse National Historic Site** (✆ **506/529-4270**). It's open June through August; entry is only a paltry C90¢ per person.

Across the street from the blockhouse sit peaceful lawns and gardens, established in 1967 to mark the centenary of Canadian Confederation. The compact park here, **Centennial Park,** also has nice views of the bay and is a pleasant spot for a picnic.

At the other end of Water Street, headed east from downtown, is the open space of **Indian Point** and a local campground. Now the views of the bay become even more panoramic, and they're especially dramatic on foggy days or at sunrise. The water here is swimmable, but quite frigid. Better to beachcomb: You might turn up worn, rounded pieces of flint and coral on the shoreline. It's not native, but imported—early traders loaded up their holds with flint from England and coral from the Caribbean to serve as ballast during the long crossings. When they arrived here, they simply dumped the rocks overboard, and today they still churn up from the deep.

For a more protected swimming spot, wander down **Acadia Drive,** which runs downhill behind the Algonquin hotel. You'll come to popular **Katy's Cove** (✆ **506/529-3433**), where floating docks form a sort of natural saltwater swimming pool along a



lovely inlet. You'll find a snack bar, playground, and sense of ease here. There's a small fee to swim here and use the playground, but it's worth it.

Atlantic Salmon Interpretive Centre The splashy visitor center of the Atlantic Salmon Federation educates the general public about the increasingly rare (and surprisingly intriguing) Atlantic salmon. Located in a bright, airy post-and-beam building, the center allows visitors to get oriented through exhibits and by viewing salmon through underwater windows or strolling outdoor walkways along Chamcook Stream. Plan to spend a half-hour here.

24 Chamcook Rd. (4 miles from St. Andrews, via Rte. 127). ✆ **506/529-1384.** Admission C$5 adults, C$4 seniors and college students, C$3 children. Daily 9am–5pm. Closed Oct to mid-May.

Kingsbrae Garden Kids This 11-hectare (27-acre) public garden opened in 1998, is on the former grounds of a long-gone estate. Its designers incorporated the existing hedges and trees, but also planned attractive open spaces around the mature plants. The grounds include almost 2,000 varieties of trees (including old-growth forest), shrubs, and plants; among the notable features are a day lily collection, extensive rose garden, small maze, fully functional Dutch windmill that circulates water through two duck ponds,

and a children's garden with an elaborate Victorian-mansion playhouse. The Garden Cafe has a patio and excellent views over the lawns to the bay below. There's also a gift shop and art gallery on the premises. Those with a horticultural bend should plan to spend a few hours here, strolling and enjoying it; as a quick picnic stop with the family, though, it's a bit expensive. (Walk to one of the town's local parks instead.)

220 King St. ✆ **866/566-8687** or 506/529-3335. Admission C$9.75 adults, C$8 students and seniors, C$24 families, free for children under 6. Gardens open mid-May to mid-Oct daily 9am–6pm; café, mid-May to mid-Oct daily 10am–5pm. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May.

Ministers Island Historic Site/Covenhoven ★★ Finds This rugged, 202-hectare (500-acre) island is linked to the mainland by a sandbar at low tide, and 2-hour-long tours are strictly scheduled around the tides. (Call for times.) Though prices have increased considerably recently, this is still a very interesting trip. You meet your tour guide on the mainland, then drive your car out in a convoy across the ocean floor to the once-magical island estate built in 1890 by Sir William Van Horne. Van Horne, originally from Illinois, was president and chief visionary of the Canadian Pacific Railway; he also built the gray sandstone mansion known as Covenhoven as a vacation home with 50 rooms (including 17 bedrooms!), a circular bathhouse (where he painted landscapes), and one of Canada's largest, most impressive barns. The estate also featured heated greenhouses (partly powered by windmill) that once grew grapes, mushrooms, and enormous, 2-pound peaches. When Van Horne was stuck working in Montréal, he shipped dairy products from the creamery and vegetables from the greenhouse to himself daily—by rail, of course. (He extended the rail line here.) You'll learn all this, and much more, on the tours. Just don't expect the mansion to be in pristine condition; since nobody lives here anymore, it's frankly falling apart, and restoring it would take big bucks. Appreciate it for what it was—and remember to get back to dry land before high tide.

Rte. 127 (northeast of St. Andrews), Chamcook. ✆ **506/529-5081.** Tours C$14 adults, C$11 seniors and students, C$45 families, free for children 6 and under. Tours mid-May to mid-Oct; closed mid-Oct to mid-May.

Boat Tours

The docks of St. Andrews are an excellent spot from which to launch an exploration of the bay, which is very much alive, biologically speaking. That means you'll very likely see a combination of whales, porpoises, seals, and bald eagles no matter what tour you select. All 2- to 3-hour tours in town generally run the same price: C$45 to C$50 per adult, less for children.

Quoddy Link Marine (✆ **877/688-2600** or 506/529-2600) offers seasonal (late June to late Oct) whale-watch tours one to three times daily on a 17m (56-foot) power catamaran, and the tour includes seafood snacks and use of binoculars; the tours take 2½ to 3 hours. Two-hour tours in search of wildlife aboard 7m (24-ft.) rigid-hull Zodiacs are offered by **Fundy Tide Runners** (✆ **506/529-4481**); passengers wear flotation suits as the boats zip around the bay for 2 to 4 hours. This outfitter is open for a longer season than many others, from May through October.

For a more traditional experience, though, sign up for a trip aboard the 22m (72-foot) square-rigged cutter the Jolly Breeze of St. Andrews ★ with **Tall Ship Whale- Watching** (✆ **866/529-8116** or 506/529-8116; www.jollybreeze.com). The outfit offers three 3½-hour sails a day from mid-June through mid-October. A flat-fee package deal for families of four (or more) is also offered. Watch for seals, dolphins, and eagles—all have been sighted from the sailboat's deck.

Bruce Smith's **excellent Seascape Kayak Tours** ★ (✆ **866/747-1884** or 506/747-1884) outfit on nearby Deer Island (see "Getting There," in the Campobello Island section, earlier) offers a different sort of up-close and personal view of the bay's natural wonders. Seascape's talented international staff leads kayak trips lasting from 2 hours (C$55 per adult) to a full day (C$150) through the islands and bays of the Campobello/Deer Isle/St. Andrews area; you might see whales, seals, porpoises, and/or eagles, snacks are provided, and no prior kayaking experience is required to sign up for a tour.

Where to Stay

Those traveling on a budget instead of seeking the luxury digs below might head for the low-slung **Picket Fence Motel,** 102 Reed Ave. (✆ **506/529-8985**). This trim and tidy property offers 17 cost-effective rooms, all with air-conditioning, close to the handsome Algonquin golf course (see "Golf," earlier) and within walking distance of St. Andrews' village center. The queen- and double-bedded rooms cost C$65 to C$80 double. It's a good deal.

Or, for something slightly more upscale that won't break your bank, contact the **Europa Inn** (✆ **506/529-3818;** www.europainn.com), an outgrowth of the successful Europa restaurant (see "Where to Dine," below) in the heart of town at 48 King St. The inn's owners rent out a series of rooms, suites, and an apartment collectively rated a very respectable 3½ out of 4 stars by Canada's government hotel-rating agency Canada Select. Nightly rates run from C$69 (for a simple room, off-season) to C$149 (for a suite in high season). Helpfully, the suites and apartment all have kitchenettes or full kitchens.

The Fairmont Algonquin ★★ The Algonquin's pedigree dates from 1889, when it opened its doors to wealthy vacationers seeking respite from the city heat. The original structure was destroyed by fire in 1914, but surviving annexes were rebuilt in Tudor style; in 1993 an architecturally similar addition was built across the road, linked by a gatehouse-inspired bridge. This red-tile-roofed resort commands your attention through its sheer size and bearing—and kilt-wearing, bagpipe-playing staff. Several long blocks from the water's edge, the inn is perched on a hill and affords panoramic bay views from a second-floor roof garden and many of the guest rooms. Rooms have been updated, and are comfortable and tasteful. In addition to its outstanding seaside golf course (see "Golf," earlier), there's now a spa at the hotel with a full card of treatments ranging from facials and nail services to body wraps and massage. The resort's **dining room** ★, open May through October, is one of the better spots in town to eat—it's often bustling with summer folks, and the kitchen produces surprisingly creative meals. Informal dining options include the **Library Lounge & Bistro** (off the main lobby) and a downstairs lounge. Farther afield, the food at the **Clubhouse Grill** on the resort's golf course is worth the drive. Note that this hotel markets itself aggressively to tour and conference operators; when they're here, the place feels a little bit like an in-joke to which you're not privy.

184 Adolphus St., St. Andrews, NB E5B 1T7. ✆ **800/441-1414** or 506/529-8823. Fax 506/529-7162. www.fairmont.com. 234 units. C$99–C$459 double; C$299–C$1,169 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free valet parking. Small cats and dogs C$25 per night. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; 2 bars; babysitting; bike rentals; children's programs; concierge; golf course; health club; Jacuzzi; outdoor heated pool; sauna; spa; 2 tennis courts; game room; salon. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Kingsbrae Arms Relais & Châteaux ★★★ Part of the Relais & Châteaux network, this Kingsbrae Arms is an expensive, luxe five-star inn with an upscale European feel. Located at the top of King Street, it occupies an 1897 manor house built by jade

merchants in 1897. The inn employs a heated pool amid rose gardens at the foot of a lawn to good effect, and sits immediately next door to Kingsbrae Garden (see above); some guest rooms have wonderful views of the gardens, others a panoramic sweep of the bay. Guests are pampered by high-thread-count sheets, thick robes, and guest-services suite stocked with complimentary snacks and refreshments. Some rooms also have Jacuzzis and steam showers—while all of them sport gas fireplaces, CD players, Wi-Fi access, satellite televisions, and Bulgari bath products. Two suites in the carriage house are especially suited for those bringing pets or young children along on the trip. For an extra charge, guests can eat **five-course meals** ★★ around a single table in the private dining room during summer—chef Marc Latulippe's New Canadian cuisine (utilizing ingredients drawn from his own garden) is superb.

219 King St., St. Andrews, NB E5B 1Y1. ✆ **506/529-1897.** www.kingsbrae.com. 8 units. C$395–C$995. Packages available. 2-night minimum; July–Aug 3-night minimum. 5% room service charge additional. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. Pets allowed with advance permission. **Amenities:** Babysitting. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units).

Seaside Beach Resort ★ (Kids) A former Frommer's editor tipped me off to this place, which fills a very important niche in the St. Andrews lodging picture: the moderately priced, family-friendly joint near the water. Two dozen cabins, cottages, and apartment units of various shapes and sizes cluster closely together by the waterfront in a simple but central complex, right beside a 60m (200-foot) boardwalk and just a 5- or 10-minute stroll from downtown. All units are equipped with surprisingly up-to-date kitchens or kitchenettes, and there's a beachy feel throughout—enhanced, no doubt, by the Cape Cod–type shingling on many of the buildings and the cottages' exposed-pine interiors. Views range from direct shots to the ocean to the honestly advertised "no view of any sort" in one unit. The newest cottage, Spruce, is the biggest and best (and priciest); it has a deck with a grill and a view, skylights, a dishwasher, and lovely woodwork. This property is a great pick when you don't want to pay for the Algonquin and Kingsbrae, or you want to cook for the kids. It's open year-round.

339 Water St., St. Andrews, NB E5B 2R2. ✆ **800/506-8677.** www.seaside.nb.ca. 24 units. Mid-June to Aug C$120–C$200 cottage; Apr to mid-June and Sept to mid-Nov C$85–C$135 cottage; mid-Nov to Mar C$65–C$105. 3-night minimum (1 unit) in summer. MC, V. Leashed dogs welcome. *In room:* Fridge, kitchenette, no phone.

Where to Dine

Some locals also swear by **The Gables,** 143 Water St. (✆ **506/529-3440**), a waterside spot that features middling food and service. You mostly come to sit out on the patio (on plastic chairs), watch the water, and feel like—well, a tourist. The menu is seafood, lobster, and burgers, but don't get your hopes up too high.

Europa ★★ (Finds) CONTINENTAL In an intriguing yellow building that once housed a movie theater and dance hall, Bavarian husband-and-wife transplants Markus and Simone Ritter whip up French-, Swiss-, and Austrian-accented cuisine for a 35-seat room. Starters could run to French onion soup; a colorful bell pepper soup; lobster bisque; smoked salmon with *rösti* and capers; or scallops seared in Mornay sauce and baked with cheese (a house specialty). Main courses usually include several versions of schnitzel (grilled pork or veal steak) with different fillings, toppings, and sauces; steak Béarnaise; duck a l'Orange; rack of lamb; haddock in lemon butter or champagne sauce; and tiger shrimp with mango chutney. Finish with a chocolate mousse, almond parfait,

or homemade ice cream or sorbet. The wine list is surprisingly strong. All in all, a lovely slice of Europe—just as the name promises.

48 King St. ✆ **506/529-3818.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$18–C$27. MC, V. Mid-May to Sept daily 5–9pm; Oct Tues–Sat 5–9pm; Nov to mid-Feb Thurs–Sat 5–9pm. Closed mid-Feb to mid-May.

4 GRAND MANAN ISLAND ★

Geologically rugged, profoundly peaceful, and indisputably remote, Grand Manan—a handsome island of 2,700 year-round residents—is just a 90-minute ferry ride from the port of Blacks Harbour, which is just southeast of St. George. Despite being located incredibly close to Maine, this is a much-prized destination for adventurous travelers; sometimes, even a highlight of their vacation. Yet the island remains a mystifying puzzle to others who fail to be taken in by its rough-hewn charm. Either this is your kind of place, or it isn't; maybe there's no in-between. One way to find out is to visit.

Grand Manan is a special favorite of both serious birders and devotees of the Pulitzer Prize–winning novelist Willa Cather, who found her way from Nebraska and New York to a cottage here. Hiking the island's trails, don't be surprised if you come across knots of quiet people peering intently through binoculars—these are the birders (not the Cather fans), on a quest to see all 300 or so species of birds that either nest here or stop by during their long migrations. This is *the* place to pad your "life list" if you're accumulating one, with birds ranging from bald eagles to puffins (you'll need to pay for a boat tour to catch a glimpse of the latter). You're practically guaranteed to see something you've never seen before.

As for Cather, she wrote some of her novels while staying on this island—her former cottage is part of an inn (see below), and her die-hard fans are as easy to spot as the birders, according to locals.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Grand Manan is reached from Blacks Harbour on the Canadian mainland via frequent ferry service in summer. **Coastal Transport car ferries** (✆ **506/642-0520;** www.coastaltransport.ca), each capable of hauling 60 cars, depart from the mainland and the island every 2 hours between 7:30am and 5:30pm during July and August, three to four times daily the rest of the year. The round-trip fare is C$11 per adult, C$5.40 per child age 5 to 12, and C$33 per car. Boarding the ferry on the mainland is free; you buy tickets when you leave the island.

Caution: This island is exceptionally popular in summer. You might wait in line, or you might not get a spot on the ferry at all. Reserve your return trip at least a day ahead to avoid getting stranded on the island overnight (unless that's what you want), and get in line early to secure a spot, too. As for departing from Blacks Harbour for the island, one time-tested strategy is to bring a picnic lunch, arrive an hour or 2 early, put your car in the line, then head for the grassy waterfront park adjacent to the wharf and eat al fresco. It's a nicely attractive spot; there's even an island to explore during low tide while you wait.

VISITOR INFORMATION The island's **Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **888/525-1655** or 506/662-3442), is located at the island's museum (see "Exploring the Island," below) in the village of Grand Harbour, one of three villages on the island's eastern shore; the center is open weekdays and Sunday afternoons through the summer, until it closes

 down in mid-September until the following June. If you come when it's closed, ask at island stores or inns for a free island map published by the **Grand Manan Tourism Association** (www.grandmanannb.com), which also has a listing of key island phone numbers.

EXPLORING THE ISLAND

Start exploring before you even land. As you come abreast of the island aboard the ferry, head for the starboard (right) side: You'll soon see the so-called **Seven Days' Work** in the rocky cliffs of Whale's Cove, a spot where seven layers of hardened lava and sill (intrusive igneous rock) have come together to create a sort of geological Dagwood sandwich.

Get an even better understanding of the local landscape at the **Grand Manan Museum** (✆ **506/662-3424**) in Grand Harbour. The museum's geology exhibit, in the basement, teaches you what to look for as you roam around the island. Serious birders might enjoy the collections donated by island birder Allan Moses upstairs, which feature 200-plus stuffed and mounted birds behind glass; I'm guessing animal-rights types would want to skip it, though. The museum also houses an impressive lighthouse lens from the Gannet Rock Lighthouse, plus a collection of various items that have washed up here at one time or another from shipwrecks. The museum is open from June to September, Monday through Friday, 9am to 5:30pm; it's also open Saturdays (same hours) in July and August. Admission is C$4 for adults, C$2 for seniors and students, and free for children under 12.

The relatively flat and compact island is perfect for cycling; the only stretches to avoid are some fast, less scenic segments of Route 776. Any of the side roads offer superb biking, and the paved cross-island road to **Dark Harbour** is especially nice; when you get there, you'll find a scenic little harbor with a few cabins, dories, and salmon pens. Eat your Wheaties before coming: This route is wild and hilly for a stretch, but then offers a memorably scenic coast down to the ocean on the island's western side as your reward.

Bike rentals are available at **Adventure High** ★ (✆ **800/732-5492** or 506/662-3563; www.adventurehigh.com) on Route 776 in **North Head,** not far from the ferry. If you're fit enough, consider leaving your car at Blacks Harbour and taking only a bike onto the boat, then returning on the last ferry; you'll save money and burn calories. The outfitter also offers sea kayak tours around the island, for those who prefer to get a rarely-seen, whale's-eye view of the impressive cliffs. Bikes rent for C$22 per day, C$16 for a half-day. Kayak tours run from C$40 for a 2-hour sunset tour to C$99 for a full day's excursion. The same folks can even rent you a cabin—or add a lobster dinner on the beach to your kayak trip, for an extra charge.

While Grand Manan is about as quiet as it gets, you can find even more silence and solitude (and cross one more island off your "life list") by driving to **White Head Island,** population 190 on a good day. To get there, drive to Ingalls Head (follow Ingalls Head Rd. from Grand Harbour) and catch a free ferry to the island. You walk along the shore to a lighthouse guarding the passage between Battle Beach and Sandy Cove. The ferry holds 10 cars and sails year-round, up to 10 times per day during the summer.

Hiking

Numerous hiking trails lace Grand Manan; they can be found everywhere, but the trailheads are mostly a matter of local knowledge. Don't hesitate to ask at your inn or the tourist information center, or to ask anyone you might meet on the street. *A Hiking Guide to New Brunswick* by Marianne Eiselt (Goose Lane Editions) costs C$17 and lists 12 hikes, with maps; this handy book is often sold on the ferry. Or check online booksellers.

The most accessible clusters of trails on Grand Manan are at the island's northern and southern tips. Head north up Whistle Road to Whistle Beach, and you'll find both the **Northwestern Coastal Trail** ★ and the **Seven Days' Work Trail** ★, both of which follow the rocky shoreline. Near the low lighthouse and towering radio antennae at Southwest Head (follow Rte. 776 all the way to its end), trails radiate out along cliffs topped with scrappy trees. The views are remarkable (when the fog's not in, that is). Just be sure to watch your step.

Whale-Watching & Boat Tours

A fine way to experience island ecology is to mosey offshore. Several outfitters offer complete nature tours, providing a nice sampling of the world above and beneath the sea. On an excursion you might see minke, finback, or humpback whales, along with exotic birds including puffins and phalaropes. **Sea Watch Tours** (✆ **877/662-8562** or 506/662-8552; www.seawatchtours.com), run by Peter and Kenda Wilcox, operates a series of excursions from late June through September, with whale sightings guaranteed or your money back, aboard a 13m (43-ft.) vessel with canopy. Rates run C$63 to C$85 for adults and C$43 to C$45 per child 12 or younger.

WHERE TO STAY

The Anchorage Provincial Park ★ (✆ **506/662-7022**) has about 100 campsites scattered about forest and field, available mid-May through mid-September. There's a small beach and a hiking trail on the property, and it's well situated for exploring the southern part of the island. It's very popular midsummer; call before you board the ferry to ask about campsite availability. Sites are C$24 to C$35, some with hookups for RVs, others better suited for a simple tent—including some involving crude shelters to help you fend off the weather.

Inn at Whale Cove Cottages ★★ The Inn at Whale Cove is a family-run compound set in a grassy meadow overlooking the aforementioned cove. The original building is a farmhouse dating to 1816, restored with a selection of simple country antiques; three guest rooms here are comfortable. Sally's Attic has a small deck with a big view, though Miss Henrietta's only sports a single bed. The living room features good reading material and a fireplace. Six cottages are scattered about the property, varying in size from one to four bedrooms; most rent only by the week, a few by the night. (One was built by author Willa Cather.) The John's Flat and Cove View units are the most modern, sporting extra bedrooms and dining rooms, decks, televisions, laundry service, and (in one case) a Jacuzzi. The 4 hectares (10 acres) of grounds, especially the pathway to the beach, are lovely. Innkeeper Laura Buckley received culinary training in Toronto and the **dining room** ★ demonstrates a deft touch with Continental cuisine. Dinners are served nightly from June through mid-October, weekends only in May and early June.

26 Whale Cove Cottage Rd., North Head, Grand Manan, NB E0G 2M0. ✆ **506/662-3181.** 9 units. C$125–C$160 double; C$800–C$950 per week cottage. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. All but 1 unit closed Nov–Apr. Dogs allowed in all but 1 unit, C$5 per day. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* TV (2 units), Jacuzzi (1 unit), kitchenette (3 units).

WHERE TO DINE

Options for dining out aren't exactly extravagant on Grand Manan, but the Inn at Whale Cove Cottages (see "Where to Stay," above) serves great meals incorporating fresh local ingredients. **Shorecrest Lodge** (✆ **506/662-3216**) in North Head, another local inn, has a country-style dining room with fireplace and hardwood floors, and serves a menu

of seafood, pizza, chicken, and beef daily during the summer months. You'll also encounter a few other family restaurants and grocers along the main road, as well.

The seasonal, summer-only **North Head Bakery** ★ (✆ **506/662-8862**) on Route 776 is superb and has been baking with traditional methods and whole grains since 1990. Breads made here daily include a crusty, seven-grain loaf and a delightful egg-and-butter bread—nor should the chocolate-chip cookies be overlooked. The bakery is on the main road, on the left as you're heading south from the ferry.

If you're here on Saturday morning between late June and early September, check out the weekly **farmer's market** in North Head.

5 SAINT JOHN ★

Centered on a good-size commercial harbor, **Saint John** is New Brunswick's largest city, the center of much of this province's industry. Spread out over a low hill with good rocky views, the downtown boasts elaborate Victorian flourishes on its rows of commercial buildings. (Look high along the cornices to appreciate the intricate brickwork.) A few impressive mansions are tucked into the side streets, their interiors featuring intricate wood carving—appropriately so, since timber barons built most of those.

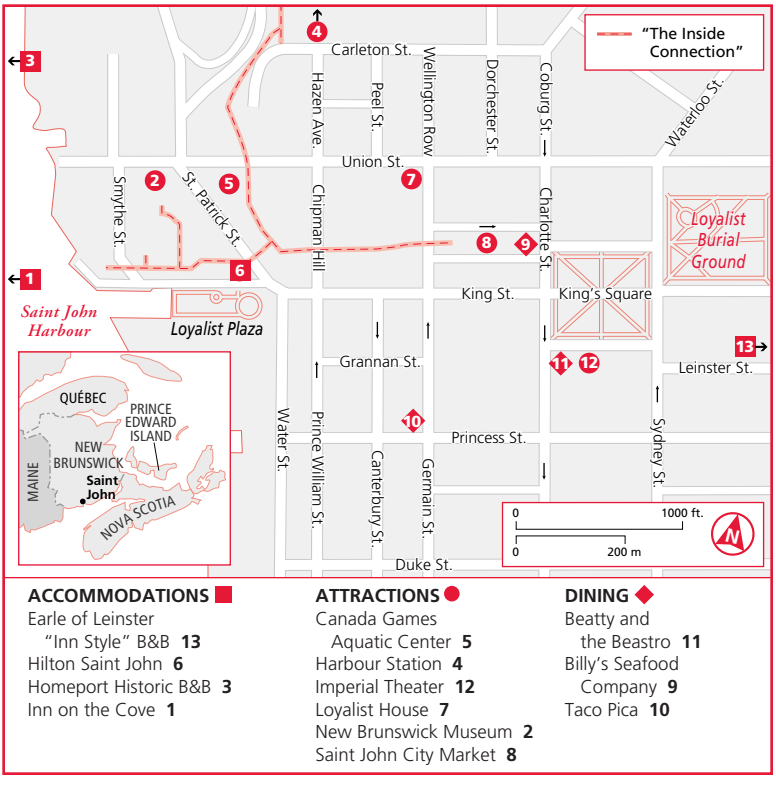
There's an industrial grittiness to the city, which can be either unappealing or charming. Just don't expect a tidy garden city with lots of neat homes; this isn't that sort of place. Instead, Saint John offers plenty of brick architecture in various states of repair. Throughout downtown you'll see its past and present front and center: big shipping terminals, oil storage tanks, and paper mills. But don't give up. The central downtown district—once you find it—is laid out in gridlike blocks and squares, good for walks waiting for the ferry to Digby, bites to eat, and a pint of beer. You might even stay a night or 2, just to get a break from the cute-village train that Atlantic Canada can sometimes be. This is a place full of life, not a postcard: Streets often bustle with skateboarders, merchants, carousers, out-for-the-weekenders, and local old-timers casing the public market for discount produce.

Note that Saint John is always spelled out, just as I have done in this sentence. It's never abbreviated as "St. John," mostly so that mail—and airplane travelers—destined for St. John's, Newfoundland, don't end up here by mistake. Good thinking. But don't worry if you get it mixed up; locals will be right quick to correct you if you err.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Saint John is located on Route 1. It's 106km (66 miles) from the U.S. border at St. Stephens and 427km (265 miles) around the bend from Halifax. If you're driving north from Maine on Route 1, note that there is a **C50¢ toll** to cross the Saint John Harbour Bridge (though you can actually avoid it by taking slower Route 100). Reach downtown by taking exit 122 or 123 off Route 1.

A year-round **ferry service** connects Saint John with Digby, Nova Scotia. For more details, see "Exploring New Brunswick" at the beginning of this chapter. Saint John's **airport,** coded YSJ (✆ **506/638-5555;** www.saintjohnairport.com), has regular flights to and from Montréal, Toronto, and Halifax on **Air Canada** (✆ **888/237-2262;** www.aircanada.com). **WestJet** (✆ **800/538-5696;** www.westjet.com) also operates flights from Toronto. There are auto-rental kiosks in the terminal, and a taxi ride into the city costs about C$30.



VISITOR INFORMATION Saint John (www.tourismsaintjohn.com) is fully stocked with three visitor information centers (VICs). Arriving from the west, look for the contemporary triangular building near the Route 1 off-ramp: This is the **Route 1 West visitor information center** (✆ **506/658-2940**), open from mid-May through early October until 8pm in mid-summer (until 6pm in the shoulder seasons). You'll find a trove of information and brochures here.

There's also a seasonal VIC, the **Reversing Falls information center** (✆ **506/658-2937**). It's located inside the observation building overlooking those popular falls (see "Outdoor Pursuits," below) on Route 100, which is also labeled on maps as Bridge Road. Get there from Route 1 by taking exit 119 or 119B; just like the Route 1 center, this VIC opens from mid-May through mid-October.

If you're already downtown, or you're visiting town outside the peak seasons, look for the **City Centre Tourist Information Centre** (✆ **886/463-8639** or 506/658-2855) inside Market Square, a central shopping mall just off the waterfront. You find the info center by entering the mall at street level, at the corner of St. Patrick and Water streets. It's open 6 days a week (closed Sun) year-round; during peak season (mid-June to mid-Sept), from 9am to 7pm and the rest of the year usually from 9am until 5:30 or 6pm.

If the weather's good, begin by wandering around the **waterfront.** Tourism Saint John has published several walking-tour brochures that offer plenty of history and architectural trivia, including a rundown of the oddly fascinating gargoyles and sculpted heads that adorn downtown's 19th-century buildings. If you have time for only one walk, architecture buffs should go on **"Prince William's Walk,"** an hour-long, self-guided tour of the city's impressive commercial buildings. (Personally, though, I like to wing it and just wander.) You can obtain these tour brochures at the **Market Square information center** (see Visitor Information, above).

Wherever you ramble, be sure to drop by the **Saint John City Market** (detailed below) and to work the **Old Burial Ground** ★ (across from King's Square) into your itinerary; it's a good place to rest for a spell. The ancient cemetery dates from 1784, but it was renovated quite recently—note the beaver fountain, which is supposed to be symbolic of the city's hardworking citizens. I think.

If you have a car, you'll also want to visit at least two of the city's tremendous **nature preserves** ★★, described below in the section "Outdoor Pursuits." I can't tell you how surprising it is to find so much lovely, varied green space in the midst of a city.

If the weather's disagreeable (it could be), head indoors. Taking a cue from Montréal, Saint John has helpfully linked up quite a number of downtown malls and shops with each other through an elaborate network of underground passageways and overhead pedestrian walkways. The whole thing has been dubbed **"The Inside Connection"** ★, and despite that rather silly name, it's well worth a look—the system makes the city approachable even in heavy rains or snow. The various spurs of the network don't only touch shopping destinations, either: two major hotels, as well as the museum, city library, city market, sports arena, and gleaming aquatic center are linked in, too.

Loyalist House ★ A mandatory destination for antiques buffs or Anglophiles, this stately white Georgian mansion was built in 1817 for the Merritts, a family of wealthy Loyalists from New York. Inside you'll find an extraordinary collection of furniture; most pieces were original to the house and have never left. Especially notable are the extensive holdings of Duncan Phyfe Sheraton furniture and a rare piano-organ combination. The house also features its original brass knocker; doors steamed and bent to fit into the curved sweep of the stairway; and intricate carvings on the wooden chair rails. It even managed to avoid being burnt to the ground during a great fire that razed much of the city in 1877. Tours of the home last 30 to 45 minutes, but the house is open only for a few months out of the year. If you're here some other time, round up an interested group (or a family reunion), give these folks a call, and ask them nicely if they can open up the house. They just might.

120 Union St. ✆ **506/652-3590.** C$3 adults, C$1 children, C$7 families. July to mid-Sept daily 10am–5pm (last admission 4:45pm); mid-May to June Mon–Fri 10am–5pm; Sept–Apr by appointment only.

New Brunswick Museum ★★ Kids The imposing-looking New Brunswick Museum is a must-stop for anyone seriously curious about this province's natural or cultural history. Collections are displayed on three open floors, an exhaustive mixture of traditional artifacts and quirky objects. Exhibits include the complete interior of Sullivan's Bar (where longshoremen used to slake their thirst a few blocks away); a massive section of ship's frame; wonderful geological exhibits; and even a sporty white Bricklin from a failed stab at auto-manufacturing in the province during the mid-'70s. (Most frightful-looking exhibit? Maybe the "permanent wave" machine from a 1930s beauty

parlor.) The "Wind, Wood, and Sail" gallery describes 19th-century shipbuilding in the province, right down to obscure details about oakum, tar, and deadeyes. There's also a Hall of Great Whales, with skeletons and scale models of the giant mammals, including a 12m (40-ft.) right whale. Allow at least 2 hours to enjoy the eclectic, uncommonly well-displayed exhibits here.

1 Market Sq. ✆ **506/643-2300.** Admission C$6 adults, C$4.75 seniors, C$3.25 students and children 4–18, C$13 families. Mon–Fri 9am–5pm (Thurs until 9pm), Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm. Closed Mon Nov to mid-May.

Saint John City Market ★★ Hungry travelers, venture here at your peril. This spacious, bustling marketplace is crammed with vendors hawking meat, fresh seafood, cheeses, flowers, baked goods, and bountiful fresh produce. (You can even sample *dulse,* a snack of dried seaweed from the Bay of Fundy—though some travelers have compared the experience to that of licking a wharf.) The market was built in 1876, and has been a constant draw for city residents ever since. Note the construction of the roof—local lore claims it resembles an inverted ship because it was made by boatbuilders who didn't know how to build anything else. Also look for small, enduring traces of tradition: The handsome iron gates at either end have been in place since 1880, and a loud bell is rung daily by the Deputy Market Clerk to signal the opening and closing of the market. A number of vendors offer meals to go, and there's bright seating in an enclosed terrace on the south side. It's definitely worth an hour or two, and perfectly positioned for an eating break for either the road- or walking-tour weary. Just don't make the mistake of coming on a Sunday or a Canadian holiday: it'll be closed.

47 Charlotte St. (facing King's Square). ✆ **506/658-2820.** Mon–Fri 7:30am–6pm; Sat 7:30am–5pm. Closed Sun and holidays.

OUTDOOR PURSUITS

There are three big natural attractions in town, all of them simple adventures of drive-walk-and-look; details are below.

If you've got more moxie (and cash), the **Reversing Falls Jet Boat Rides** (✆ **888/634-8987** or 506/634-8987) run fun, fast boat trips through the Reversing Falls and out through the harbor in two configurations: a sightseeing tour and a "thrill ride." These always-breezy, sometimes-damp trips don't take long (about 20 min.), but they're fun. They're also pricey: Figure C$35 per adult, C$26 per child, or C$115 for a family; all tickets include the use of raincoats. Reservations are recommended during peak season. The tours depart from a narrow cove at **Fallsview Park** (see "Reversing Falls," below).

Irving Nature Park ★★ Kids Say what you want about Irving and fossil fuel-dependency, but the oil giant's founder whipped up and donated one little gem of a park within the Saint John city limits. Located across the Saint John River, the Nature Park consists of 240 dramatic hectares (600 acres) on a coastal peninsula. As many as 240 species of birds have been spotted. Soft wood-chipped trails and marsh boardwalks provide access to a lovely forest and wild, salty seascapes. The observation tower on the "Squirrel Trail" gives a fine vantage of the park and mud flats, where migrating sandpipers devour shrimp before flying 4 days nonstop to Surinam. Throngs of seals cover the park, usually in mid-June and mid-October, often so thick on the rocks that they have been beautifully described as "a great gray noisy carpet." This park can get very busy—it sees 125,000 visitors a year—so avoid summer Sundays, which are busiest. Also call ahead to ask about the park's excellent program of tours and events (moonlight

snowshoeing, meteor shower watches, day camps for children); even if there's nothing in particular going on, you might still stick around an hour or two—or more. There are even barbecue pits, in case you want to grill while you green.

Sand Cove Rd. ✆ **506/653-7367.** Take exit 119A off Rte. 1, then follow Bleury St. to Sand Cove Rd. and continue to the end. Free admission and tours. Daily dawn to dusk; information booth staffed daily May–Oct.

Reversing Falls Overrated Just west of downtown is Reversing Falls, located within an impressive rocky gorge, a natural phenomenon gone tourist-tacky if there ever was one. They probably should've just left well enough alone. The falls here reverse because of huge local tides battling against the Saint John River's flow; rapids, small waterfalls, and big, slurping whirlpools flow one way up through the gorge during the incoming tide, then reverse during the opposite tide. It's somewhat dramatic, but few publicity photos or descriptions include an important fact: There's a huge paper mill right next door, and an active train trestle and a busy highway spanning the gorge. This isn't a wild natural place like the Irving Nature Park (see above), irony of ironies.

There are several ways to observe the falls. You can scramble down wooden steps to a park at river's edge, or climb atop a rooftop viewing platform, both for free. You can cross the river to **Fallsview Park** (go left on Douglas Ave., then left again on Fallsview Ave.) and get a water-level view. Or, you can dine at **The Falls Restaurant** (✆ **506/635-1999**), open year-round, but you're paying for the view and not the so-so food. (Can't get a table overlooking the falls? Skip it.)

Rte. 100. ✆ **506/658-2937.** Free admission to viewing platform. Early June to mid-Oct daylight hours, but best at low or high tide. Call for tidal schedule.

Rockwood Park ★★ Kids The extensive footpaths attract walkers and joggers to these 890 hectares (2,200 acres) of lovely urban preserve, which take in lakes, forests, and rocky hills. There's also swimming at sandy beaches, golf at a pretty 18-hole municipal golf course (✆ **506/634-0090;** greens fees C$25–C$37), picnic areas, a campground, mini-golf, and the small Cherry Creek zoo with several dozen species of exotic animals, including six species of monkeys on the endangered species list. In short, there's something for everyone in the family. Boat rentals available include canoes and kayaks. There's even an eco-friendly aquatic driving range, where golfers practice swings by hitting floating golf balls into a lake—and they're later scooped up by a trolling boat. The park, located just 5 minutes' drive north of downtown, gets especially popular on weekends.

Lake Dr. S. ✆ **506/658-2883.** Free admission to park; Cherry Creek zoo C$7–C$9 adults, C$4.50–C$6 children; various fees for equipment rental and golf. Interpretation Centre late May to early Sept daily 8am–dusk.

WHERE TO STAY

Budget travelers should head for Manawagonish Road, where many of the city's lower-priced motels congregate. A bonus: Unlike most other motel strips, this one's actually reasonably attractive as it winds along a high ridge of residential homes west of town, providing views out to the Bay of Fundy. It's about a 10-minute ride back to town. Nightly rates at many of the mom-and-pop motels on the strip are unbelievably low, sometimes as low as the C$60 range even during peak summer season. The chain property **Econo Lodge Inn & Suites,** 1441 Manawagonish Rd. (✆ **800/55-ECONO** [553-2666] or 506/635-8700), is somewhat more expensive but a bit more comfortable, and the rooms have those sweeping views.

In-town camping is available summers at **Rockwood Park** (✆ **506/652-4050**), though it's a lot more like car camping than in-the-wild camping. Eighty or so sites are spread across a rocky hill; unfortunately, many overlook downtown, the highway, and a railyard (expect nighttime noise). RVs requiring full hookups are directed to an area resembling a parking lot. Other sites vary widely in privacy and scenery. Rates start at around C$18 for a tent site and around C$24 for hookups. Follow signs to the park from either exit 122 or exit 125 off Route 1.

Expensive

Hilton Saint John ★★ This 12-story waterfront hotel was built in 1984, and has all the amenities you'd expect from an upscale chain hotel: You're trading personality and charm for dependability. Rooms on the top two floors have been updated and upgraded to include perks like electronic safes, cordless phones, bigger desks, free high-speed Internet, and terry-cloth robes. They also have the best views and big comfy beds. It helps that this hotel boasts probably the best location of any in Saint John, overlooking the harbor yet also just steps from the rest of downtown by street or indoor walkway. Windows in all guest rooms open, allowing in the sea breeze, and the business center is well stocked. This Hilton is connected to the city's convention center, so it attracts large groups of conventioneers and tons of associated events; ask whether anything's scheduled before you book if you don't want to be overwhelmed. The hotel's lounge offers light meals through midnight, while the main dining room serves more refined food in an understated harborside setting nightly.

1 Market Sq., Saint John, NB E2L 4Z6. ✆ **800/561-8282** in Canada, 800/445-8667 in the U.S., or 506/693-8484. Fax 509/657-6610. www.hiltonsaintjohn.com. 197 units. C$119–C$219 double. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking C$17 per night. Pets allowed. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; lounge; babysitting; concierge; fitness room; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; game r oom; salon; 24-hr. room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, minibar.

Homeport Historic B ed & Br eakfast ★★ Kids This architecturally impressive home was built by a prominent shipbuilding family (hence the name), and sits high atop a rocky ridge on the north side of Route 1 overlooking downtown and the harbor. Built around 1858—that's before Canada was even Canada yet—it's one of southern New Brunswick's best options for an overnight if you're a fan of old houses. Rooms here are furnished with materials gleaned from local auctions and shops; look for sleigh beds and (nonworking) marble fireplaces, for instance. The Veranda Room is particularly spacious, with fine harbor views and afternoon sunlight; the walls are decorated with steel engravings commemorating the laying of the first trans-Atlantic cable, floors are of hand-cut pine, and there's locally made antique furniture. The Harbour Master Suite has a four-poster bed and small sitting room good for those traveling with a child or two. As well, all units have individually controlled heat—a rarity in small inns. Breakfasts are served family-style around a long antique table in the dining room.

80 Douglas Ave. (take exit 121 or 123 to Main St.), Saint John, NB E2K 1E4. ✆ **888/678-7678** or 506/672-7255. w ww.homeport.nb.ca. 10 units . C$109– C$175 double and suit e. Rates include full br eakfast. AE, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (1 unit); kitchenette (1 unit).,

Inn on the Cove & Spa ★★ This is a lovely inn in a pretty setting, overlooking the ocean, about a 15-minute drive from downtown Saint John. The house, built in 1910, was once a classic late Victorian; subsequent changes to the architecture created bright, spacious rooms that take full advantage of the terrific views. Some of the newer "superior"

rooms offer decks, Jacuzzis, and some of the best bathtub views in the Maritimes—but even the least expensive room here has a private bathroom down the hall with the same view. All rooms have free high-speed Internet access; meals are excellent; and there's a day spa offering mud wraps and facials for an extra charge. The wonderful Irving Nature Park (see "Outdoor Pursuits," above) is next door, so guests can hike right from the inn to dramatic Sheldon's Point.

1371 Sand Cove Rd., Saint John, NB E2M 4X7. ✆ **877/257-8080** or 506/672-7799. www.innonthecove.com. 9 units. Late June to mid-Oct C$175–C$225 double; rest of the year C$135–C$195 double. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. Small dogs allowed in kennels. Children 12 and up welcome. **Amenities:** Restaurant; spa; hair salon. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units), kitchenette (1 unit).

Moderate

Earle of Leinster "Inn Style" Bed & Breakfast (Value) The Earle of Leinster, a handsome Victorian row house in a working-class neighborhood not far from King's Square, is a welcoming, casual place rather than a fancy one; it feels like a small European hotel. There's a kitchen and free self-serve washer and dryer for guests, plus a pool table and TV in the basement. The Fitzgerald and Lord Edward rooms in the main house are the most historic, with high ceilings and regal furniture; most of the rest are out in the carriage house and feel motel-like, though a second-floor loft is quite spacious and some units resemble mini-suites with their microwave ovens. All units have Wi-Fi access; bathrooms, while private, are on the small side.

96 Leinster St., Saint John, NB E2L 1J3. ✆ **506/652-3275.** www.earleofleinster.com. 7 units. C$93–C$115 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Pets allowed. **Amenities:** Laundry. *In room:* TV/VCR, fridge, hair dryer, kitchenette (some units), no phone.

WHERE TO DINE

For lunch, also don't overlook Saint John's **city market** (see above)—grab a light meal and some fresh juice in the market to go, then eat it either in the alley atrium or right on King's Square.

Beatty and the Beastro ★★ (Finds) CONTINENTAL Ignore the silly name; this big-windowed establishment fronting King's Square is one of the best-looking eateries in Saint John, showing off a modern, European look. Service is cordial and efficient, and the food's very good. Lunch includes soups, salads, omelets, curry wraps, and elaborate gourmet sandwiches (but the simple grilled fish sandwich isn't bad, either). Critics have praised the lamb dinner entree, the preparation of which varies nightly according to the chef's desire; the house curries are good, as are chicken parmigiana, schnitzel served with spaetzle, the steaks, chicken Florentine, and a Hungarian-influenced chicken dish (lots of paprika) of the restaurant's own creation. When dessert time rolls around, try a piece of butterscotch pie, coconut cream pie, or lemon chess pie—each has a large local cheering section.

60 Charlotte St. (on King's Sq.). ✆ **506/652-3888.** Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses C$7–C$10 at lunch, C$20–C$21 at dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–9pm; Sat 5:30–10pm. Closed Sun.

Billy's Seafood Company ★★ (Kids) SEAFOOD It's not fancy but it's not a dive; it's just right. Billy Grant's seafood eatery off King's Square gets big points for its friendly staff, fresh-off-the-boat seafood (they sell it to City Market customers during the day), better pricing than the tourist-oriented seafood restaurants on the waterfront, and great attitude toward kids. They really know how to cook fish here without *over*cooking it. Specialties of the house include cedar-planked salmon, Billy's bouillabaisse, and delicious lighter entrees:

lobster rolls, oysters-and-chips, and a chicken breast club sandwich. They also serve steak, pasta, and even a rack of lamb if you're somehow not in the mood for fish.

49–51 Charlotte St. (at City Market). ✆ **888/933-3474** or 506/672-3474. www.billysseafood.com. Reservations suggested. Entrees C$6–C$29. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–11pm; Sun 4–9pm. Closed Sun Jan–Mar.

Taco Pica ★ (Finds) LATIN AMERICAN Here's something refreshingly different: a restaurant that's cooperatively owned by the chefs, servers, and managers, and some of their friends. (Its full name is "Taco Pica Worker Cooperative Restaurant.") It's bright, festive, and just a short stroll off King Street. The restaurant developed a devoted local following when it opened in the mid-'90s, thanks to a menu that's a notch above the usual staid local adaptations of Latin American and Mexican fare. Reliable dishes prepared here by the Guatemalan staff include *pepian* (a spicy beef stew with chayote); garlic shrimp; and shrimp tacos with potatoes, peppers, and cheese. Vegetarian items are also available, as are a good variety of fresh juices and libations—fruit margaritas definitely put out the fire in a hot dish. Insiders' tip: There's sometimes a live guitarist at night, and the place even occasionally turns into an impromptu Latin-flavored dance club on weekend nights (after the dinner service, of course).

96 Germain St. ✆ **506/633-8492.** Reservations recommended on weekends. Main courses C$8–C$17. AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 10am–10pm. Closed Sun and holidays.

SAINT JOHN AFTER DARK

The best theater entertainment in town can be found at the **Imperial Theatre** ★ (✆ **506/674-4100** or 800/323-7469 from Maine and the Maritimes) on King's Square—not just because of the acts, but because of what the Toronto *Globe and Mail* called the "most beautifully restored theatre in Canada." It opened in 1913 and hosted such luminaries as Edgar Bergen, Al Jolson, and Walter Pidgeon (the latter a Saint John native). Driven out of business by movie houses, it served for a time as a Pentecostal church and was threatened with demolition. That's when concerned citizens stepped in. The Imperial reopened in 1994, and has since hosted a wide range of performances from Broadway road shows to local theater productions and music concerts. If nothing's scheduled during your stay, a guide still gives half-hour tours during summertime; admire the intricate plasterwork and a 3m (9-ft.) chandelier. The tours are offered daily except Sunday by appointment only, 9am to 5pm, for C$2 per person. See the theater's website at **www.imperialtheatre.nb.ca** for performance schedules.

If you're looking to catch a big-time recording act passing through town, head for **Harbour Station** (✆ **506/657-1234,** or 800/267-2800 from Maine or the Maritimes; www.harbourstation.nb.ca) at 99 Station St. The acts here run the gamut—during your stay in town, you might coincide with anyone from Mötley Crüe, WWE wrestling, and Brad Paisley (we'll pass) to pre-season hockey and Willie Nelson (we're in).

The rest of Saint John's nightlife revolves around the city's seemingly unending selection of **pubs,** most featuring live music and concentrated in the downtown district. They're all more or less the same experience, and fit the bill if you want beer, music, iffy food, and noisy conviviality.

A ROAD TRIP TO THE FUNDY TRAIL PARKWAY

Fundy Trail Parkway ★★ (Kids) Less than an hour's drive from downtown Saint John, the amazing little Fundy Trail Parkway is almost unknown outside New Brunswick. Get to know it. An ambitious multi-use trail that will eventually extend for 48km

(30 miles) and link up with the Trans-Canada Trail, the parkway so far counts about 16km (10 miles) of hiking and biking trails—paralleled by about 11km (7 miles) of paved road for autos—all planned to show off the spectacular local bays and cliffs. The trail is wide and easy to hike or bike, with wheelchair-accessible pullouts that have spectacular coastal views; side trails lead to various beaches, some of which can only be reached at low tide. Admission is the same for cars or bikes. You can also catch a free shuttle (with paid admission) that stops at each of nine parking lots, and there are even water stations and picnic tables spaced out along the way. The interpretive center here has interesting displays, but don't linger: The real thing is much better. Two-hour guided tours are offered (weekdays only) for C$3 per person in summer, while a half-day foliage tour is C$25 for adults and C$12 per child; you can rent bikes for C$40 per day.

Finally, if you want to stay overnight on the trail, you can. The **Hearst Lodge,** built by the newspaper magnate, is a rustic cabin about 1 hour's (3km/2 miles') hike off the trail. It opens to the public June through September for C$99 per person double occupancy, breakfast and dinner included.

Rte. 111 (at St. Martins). ✆ **866/386-3987** or 506/833-2019. www.fundytrailparkway.com. Day pass C$4 adult, C$3.50 senior, C$2.50 child 12 and under, C$13 family. Mid-May to mid-Oct trail gates daily 6am–8pm, interpretive center from 8am. Take Rte. 111 east; entrance is 10km (6¼ miles) east of St. Martins (watch for signs). Leashed dogs allowed.

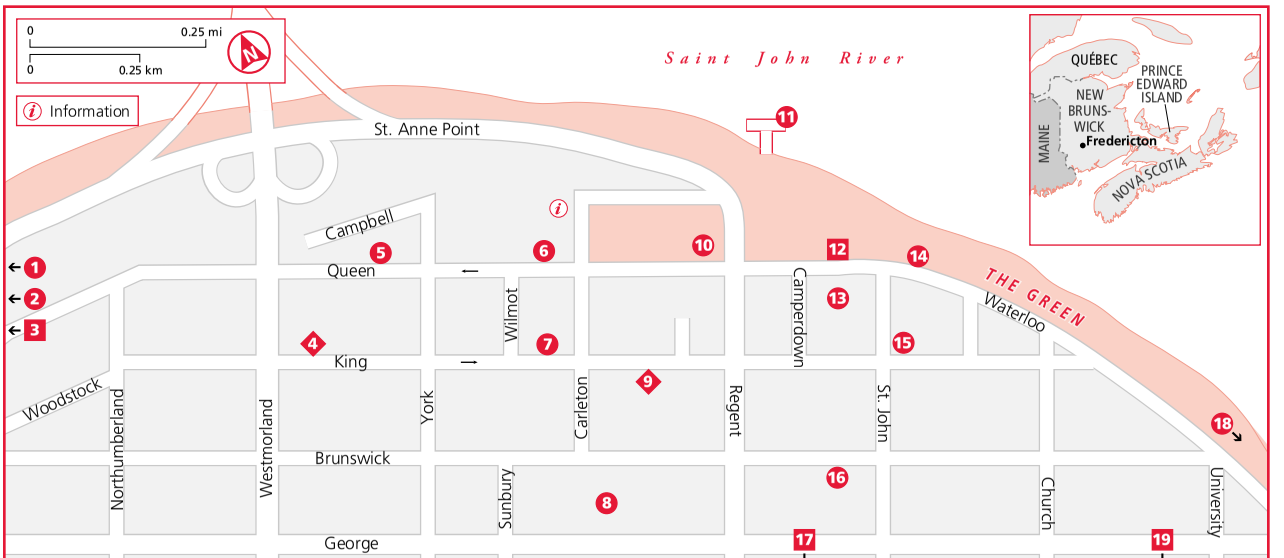
6 FREDERICTON

Few outsiders probably realize that the capital of New Brunswick is *not* Saint John: It's the city of Fredericton, a compact, historic place of brick and concrete that unfolds along the banks of the wide Saint John River. Its handsome buildings, broad streets, and wide sidewalks make the place feel more like a big village than a small city. Two icons announce you've arrived: the stately elm trees here that somehow resisted Dutch elm disease, and the Union Jack occasionally fluttering from buildings, attesting to long-standing ties with Mother England.

The city is divided into three zones: malls and motels atop the hills near the Trans-Canada Highway; the impressive, Georgian-style University of New Brunswick on a hillside just south of town; and downtown itself, a casual blend of modern and historic buildings.

Most visitors focus on the **downtown.** The main artery—where you'll find the bulk of the attractions and restaurants—is **Queen Street,** which parallels the river. An ill-considered four-lane highway separates much of the center from the actual river banks, but you can reach water's edge either via **The Green,** a pathway that follows the river, or by crossing a pedestrian bridge at the foot of Carleton Street.

Once you've seen the river, it's time to get to know the buildings and people. With a population of just 50,000 (not including its 'burbs), Fredericton is low-key. There's really no single must-see attraction here, but strolling the streets gives you a sense of history and place. If New Brunswick's main allure for you lies in its shimmering sea, deep woods, high tides, and wide open spaces, you won't miss much by skipping Fredericton. But if your passions include history—especially the history of British settlements in North America—it's well worth the detour.



ATTRACTIONS ●

Beaverbrook Art Gallery **14**
Carleton II Boat Tour **11**
City Hall **5**
Fredericton Small Craft & Aquatic Centre **1**
Old Burial Ground **8**
Old Government House **2**
Provincial Legislative Assembly Building **15**
Science East **16**
Soldiers Barracks **6**
Theatre New Brunswick Playhouse **13**
Waterloo Row **18**
Wilmot United Church **7**
York-Sunbury Museum **10**

ACCOMMODATIONS ■

Carriage House Inn **19**
Crowne Plaza Fredericton Lord Beaverbrook Hotel **12**
Delta Fredericton **3**
Fredericton Inn **17**

DINING ◆

Brewbakers **9**
Dimitri's Souvlaki **4**

Fredericton: The Land of Wi and Fi

Surprisingly, Fredericton has several times been named one of the most "wired" cities in all of North America; it's now easier to find a free (and legal) "hot spot" with a laptop in this city than it is in New York City or San Francisco. That's thanks to the 2003 installation of a citywide Wi-Fi network. Known by the odd name of **Fred-e-Zone** (www.fredezone.ca), the city's network offers numerous access points—not only downtown, but at the local airport, in shopping malls, even in parks and sports arenas throughout the city. Fredericton was the first city in Canada to offer such a service, and while coverage isn't guaranteed on *every* street corner, it is available in most of the downtown. And it's *free* (did I mention that already?); no overpriced gourmet cup of coffee required.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Fredericton's not on the way to anything. Fortunately, though, it's only about 112km (70 miles)—a little more than an hour's drive—north from Saint John via Route 7. From the U.S.-Canadian border at Houlton, Maine, it's about the same distance: Take Route 95 to Woodstock, New Brunswick, then turn onto the Trans-Canada Highway and follow it east for an hour. Look for signs directing you downtown. (From the west, follow Woodstock Road, which tracks along the river. From Saint John, look for Route 7 to Regent Street, and then turn right down the hill.)

Fredericton International Airport (✆ **506/460-0920;** www.frederictonairport.ca), coded YFC, is located 10 minutes southeast of downtown on Route 102 and is served by cab and rental-car companies. For flight information, contact **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com), which is basically the only carrier here. The airline connects Fredericton daily with Montréal, Halifax, and Toronto.

VISITOR INFORMATION Always careful to cater to visitors, Fredericton maintains several central visitor information centers. There's one in **City Hall** at 397 Queen St. (✆ **506/460-2129**), open May through October; one in an Irving Big Stop gas station, near the airport; and a third at **King's Landing** (✆ **506/460-2191**), at 20 Kings Landing Rd. just west of town in River Valley, open from mid-May through early October. No matter which one you find first, ask for a Visitor Parking Pass, which allows visitors from outside the province to park free at city lots and meters in town for several days without penalty. You can also request travel information in advance by visiting the city's website at **www.tourismfredericton.ca** or by calling ✆ **888/888-4768** or 506/460-2129.

EXPLORING FREDERICTON

The free ***Fredericton Visitor Guide,*** available at the information centers and many hotels around town, includes a well-written and informative **walking tour** of the downtown area. It's worth tracking down before exploring the city.

City Hall, at 397 Queen St., is an elaborate Victorian building with a prominent brick tower and a 2.5m (8-ft.) clock dial. The second-floor City Council Chamber occupies what used to be Fredericton's opera house until the 1940s. Small, folksy tapestries adorn the **visitor's gallery** and tell the town's history. Learn about these tapestries—and the rest of the building—during free tours, offered twice daily from mid-May through mid-October

(both in English and French). Contact the tourism office (✆ **506/460-2129**) to arrange a tour.

Officers' Square, on Queen Street between Carleton and Regent streets, is a handsome city park now, but in 1785 it was the center of the city's military activity; it was chiefly used for drills, first as part of the British garrison and then, until 1914, by the Canadian Army. Today, the only soldiers are local actors who put on a little show for the tourists. Concerts and dramatic events are also staged on the square during summer. That handsome colonnaded stone building facing the parade grounds is the former officers' quarters, now the **York-Sunbury Museum** (see below).

In the center of the square, there's a prominent statue of a robed Lord Beaverbrook. It's a name you hear a lot in Fredericton—a street, a museum, and a hotel also bear his name—though it wasn't actually his name; he was born Max Aitken in Newcastle, New Brunswick. Aitken amassed a fortune, primarily in publishing, during his life and was made a lord in Britain in 1917, using the name of a stream near Newcastle where he had fished as a boy. Aitken later donated an art collection and a modern building to house it in (the Beaverbrook Art Gallery, natch), along with a modern playhouse, now home to the **Theatre New Brunswick,** built the same year Beaverbrook died (1964).

Two blocks upriver from Officers' Square are the Soldiers' Barracks, housed in a similarly grand stone building. Check your watch against a sundial high on the end of the barracks, a replica of the original timepiece. A small exhibit explains the life of enlisted men during the 18th century.

Fredericton is well noted for its distinctive architecture, especially its neighborhoods of fine Victorian and Queen Anne residences. Particularly attractive is **Waterloo Row** ★, a group of privately owned historic homes—some grand, some less so—just south of the downtown area. Follow the river bank south (near the University of New Brunswick) to find these houses.

One entertaining and enlightening way to learn about the city's history is to sign up for a walking tour with the **Calithumpians Theatre Company** ★. Costumed guides offer free tours in July and August, pointing out highlights with anecdotes and dramatic tales. Recommended is the nighttime "Haunted Hike" tour, done by lantern light, which runs 6 nights each week (no Sunday tours). The tour takes about 2 hours and costs C$13 for adults, C$8 for children; meet at The Coach House at the corner of Church and Queen streets (behind Gallery 78). Call the theater company at ✆ **506/457-1975** for more information.

If you're in town on a Saturday, do not miss the **Boyce Farmers' Market** ★ (✆ **506/451-1815**) at 665 George St. (corner of Regent St.)—it's adjacent to **Science East** (see below). This award-winning market, which runs from about 6am until about 1pm, has existed here in one form or another since the late 18th century (although the current building was constructed in the 1950s, and later expanded). Something approaching 200 vendors—butchers, bakers, even some candlestick makers—still hawk everything from fresh produce to crafts, croissants, and artisanal smoked meats, just as they always have done. *Harrowsmith* magazine once selected this market as one of the top farmer's markets in Canada. It's well worth an hour of your Saturday morning.

Also don't miss any event hosted by the local artists' coop **Gallery Connexion** (✆ **506/454-1433;** www.galleryconnexion.ca). Currently without a permanent home or studio space, the collective nonetheless soldiers on, presenting talks, video artworks, exhibitions, musical performances, and other events. Check the website or call the gallery office, located (for now) at the Fredericton Playhouse.

OUTDOOR PURSUITS

Fredericton has expanded its trail system for walkers and bikers; the system now includes some 80km (50 miles) of trails. The centerpiece is undeniably **The Green** ★, a 5km (3-mile) path that follows the river from the Delta hotel (see "Where to Stay," below) to near the Princess Margaret Bridge. It's a lovely walk, and passes by most of the city's key sightseeing points: the **Old Government House** (see below), the downtown area, and open parklands near Waterloo Row.

Connecting with The Green is a well-used pedestrian bridge that crosses an abandoned railroad trestle just east of downtown. From this vantage point, you can get great views of downtown and the surrounding river valley. If you continue, the **Nashwaak/Marysville Trail** ★ then follows an abandoned rail bed along the attractive Nashwaak River; after about 4km (2½ miles) you can cross the river at Bridge Street and loop back to the pedestrian rail bridge via the 3-mile **Gibson Trail.**

A number of other trails link up to this network, as well. A free trail guide is available at the information centers, or contact the **New Brunswick Trails Council** (✆ **800/526-7070**), which builds and maintains bridges and trails throughout the system.

Bikes may be rented by the hour or the day until the snow flies at both the **Lighthouse Adventure Centre** (✆ **506/460-2939**), near **Regent St. Wharf** in the Fredericton Lighthouse, and at **Radical Edge,** 386 Queen St. (✆ **506/459-3478**). Figure about C$20 to C$25 per day or C$5 to C$7.50 per hour for a rental.

Another option for getting on the water is the **Small Craft Aquatic Centre,** on Woodstock Road (behind the Victoria Health Centre and near the Old Government House; ✆ **506/460-2260**). It's open daily from the middle of May to early October and rents rowing shells, canoes, and kayaks. Also ask about naturalist-guided tours of the river.

Finally, the **Kingswood** golf course (✆ **800/423-5969** or 506/443-3333; www.kingswoodpark.com/golf.php) is among the province's finest. It consists of 27 holes, a par-3 course, and a driving range. Greens fees for 18 holes run from C$54 to C$69.

ATTRACTIONS DOWNTOWN

Beaverbrook Art Gallery ★ (Value) This surprisingly impressive museum overlooks the waterfront and is home to an extensive collection of British paintings, including works by Reynolds, Gainsborough, Constable, and Turner. Antiques buffs gravitate to the rooms with period furnishings and early decorative arts, while others find themselves drawn to Dalí's massive *Santiago El Grande* and studies for an ill-fated portrait of Winston Churchill. Exhibits of modern art are increasing. Other shows have touched on more conventional ground, such as 19th-century French realism and a show on the cities of Canada drawn from The Seagram Collection. This gallery is especially strong when showing the art of First Nations (native Canadian) artists. Stop by, or check the website, to find out what's currently on display.

703 Queen St. ✆ **506/458-2028.** www.beaverbrookartgallery.org. Admission C$8 adults, C$6 seniors, C$3 students, C$18 families; Thurs evenings after 5:30pm pay what you wish. Tues–Wed and Sat 9am–5:30pm, Thurs 9am–9pm, Sun noon to 5:30pm. Closed Mon Jan–May.

Old Government House ★ Government House, constructed in 1828, was built as the official residence of the lieutenant governor and governor of the province of locally quarried sandstone in a rigorously classical style. It features a Palladian symmetry and intricate plasterwork. During various periods of time it housed a school, a military hospital, and a detachment of Mounties; spared from the wrecking ball, the home was

restored and reopened in 1999, and is now once again the official residence of the lieutenant governor, who has an apartment on the third floor and an office on the second floor. Bilingual tours begin in the basement interpretive center and last about 45 minutes. You hike sweeping staircases and view extraordinarily high-ceilinged reception rooms; there's an art gallery on the second floor, and the rooms are full of intriguing period pieces and fixtures. Ask the helpful guides anything.

51 Woodstock Rd. (next to the Sheraton hotel). ✆ **506/453-2505.** www.gnb.ca/lg/ogh. Free admission. Mid May–Aug tours Mon–Sat 10am–4pm and Sun noon–4pm; off season by appointment only.

Provincial Legislative Assembly Building ★★ New Brunswick's official Assembly Building, built in 1880, boasts an exterior in bulbous, extravagant Second Empire style, but the dressed-up interior is the star. Behind heavy doors that look like the gates of Oz, you find a creaky, wooden place that's surprisingly welcoming. In the small rotunda, look first for the prints from John James Audubon's elephant folio, which are kept on display in a special case. The assembly chamber itself nearly takes your breath away, especially when viewed from the visitor gallery on the upper floors. (To get there, you climb a graceful wood spiral stairway housed in its own rotunda.) The chamber is over-the-top ornate in that fussy Victorian way all out of proportion to the legislative humdrum. Note the regal trappings, including a portrait of a young Queen Elizabeth. Half-hour-long tours are available; plan to spend at least an hour here if you really love old buildings. ***Note:*** At press time, this building was closed to tours due to ongoing renovations. Call ahead to learn its current status.

706 Queen St. (across from the Beaverbrook Art Gallery). ✆ **506/453-2506.** www.gnb.ca/legis. Free admission. June to mid-Aug daily 9am–5pm.

Science East ★★ Kids Children usually enjoy a visit to this science center for two reasons: First, it's located in an old jail, a sturdy stone structure built in the 1840s (and still used as a jail as late as 1996). And then there are the great exhibits: more than 150 interactive displays in all, both indoors and out. Kids can fool around with a huge kaleidoscope, use a periscope to people-watch, check out a solar-powered water fountain, make patterns with a laser beam, even create a miniature tornado—though, truth be told, the dungeon museum probably will impress them more than all that. It's an ideal place to visit with the kids on a chilly or rainy day, and there's lots to do outside here on nice days, too. This is one of Canada's preeminent science museums, and if you have kids with a spark of curiosity, this place is easily worth up to 2 hours of your time.

668 Brunswick St. ✆ **506/457-2340.** www.scienceeast.nb.ca. Admission C$8 adults, C$7 seniors, C$5 children under 16 or students, C$22 families. June–Aug Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–4pm; rest of the year, Mon–Fri noon–5pm, Sat 10am–5pm, closed Sun.

York-Sunbury Museum Kids This small museum lures visitors with the promise of a stuffed 42-pound frog, supposedly fattened on a diet of June bugs, cornmeal, buttermilk, and whiskey, known throughout the province as the Coleman Frog (for its supposed owner). It's displayed on the topmost floor to ensure that you wander through all the exhibits looking for it—but is ultimately a disappointment when you get there; some visitors even believe it's a fake. Still, the rest of the museum is nicely done. Displays feature the usual artifacts, but there's a fine display on Loyalist settlers. And boys might like the claustrophobically re-created World War II trench on the second floor.

571 Queen St. near Regent St. ✆ **506/455-6041.** Admission C$3 adults, C$1 students, C$6 families. July–Aug, Mon–Sat 10am–5pm, Sun noon–5pm; Apr–June and Sept–Nov, Tues–Sat 1–4pm. Closed Dec–Mar.

ATTRACTIONS OUTSIDE OF TOWN

Kings Landing Historical S ettlement ★★ Kings Landing, on the bank of the Saint John River, is about 32km (20 miles)—and 150 years—away from Fredericton. The huge (121-hectare/300-acre) authentic re-creation brings to life the New Brunswick from the years 1790 to 1910: It consists of about 20 historic homes and buildings. The aroma of baking bread mixes with the smells of horses and livestock (make what you will of that), and the blacksmith's hammer clashes with church bells while costumed "settlers" chat about their lives. The best buildings—nearly all built by Loyalists relocated from New England—include Hagerman House (furniture by cabinetmaker John Warren Moore), Ingraham House (regional furniture and a formal English garden), and Morehouse House (an interesting kitchen and a clock Benedict Arnold left behind). The C. B. Boss Sash and Door Factory is a simulated turn-of-the-20th-century manufacturing plant. There's also an ox barn, a farmhouse, several churches, and a scenic little cove to enjoy.

Afterward, hitch a ride on the sloven wagon—a low-slung work wagon distinctive to the Maritimes (it was invented in Saint John)—or lunch at the King's Head Inn, which served travelers along the Saint John River more than a century ago and offers grub and grog such as ale, chicken pie, and corn chowder.

20 K ings Landing Rd . (exit 253 off the Trans-Canada H wy., on R te. 2 w est). ✆ **506/363-4999.** www. kingslanding.nb.ca. A dmission C$16 adults , C$14 seniors , C$13 students o ver 16, C$11 childr en 6–16, C$37 families. June to mid-Oct daily 10am–5pm. Closed mid-Oct to May.

SHOPPING

Fredericton is home to a growing number of artists and artisans, as well as entrepreneurs who have launched a handful of offbeat shops. It's worth setting aside an hour or two for browsing.

Aitkens Pewter This well-known shop sells classically designed pewter dishes and mugs based on historic patterns, as well as modern adaptations and jewelry, at a downtown shop. Walk-through tours of the actual pewterwork studio (in an industrial park, about 9km/6 miles southeast of the city center) are also allowed, twice per day, on weekdays. 408 Queen St. ✆ **800/567-4416** or 506/453-9474; studio 506/450-8188.

Cultures Boutique This is one of a chain of YMCA-run shops that promote alternative trade to benefit craftspeople in the Third World. Look for goods from foreign lands as well as North American native cultures, mostly from community-based cooperatives. 383 Mazzucca Lane (off York St. btw. King and Queen). ✆ **506/462-3088.**

Gallery 78 In a handsome Queen Anne–style mansion with a pointy turret, you can find one of the province's oldest private art galleries. The sunny spaces upstairs and down showcase a range of regional art, much of it sold at affordable prices, from talented local painters, sculptors, printmakers, and photographers. It's closed Mondays. 796 Queen St. (near the Beaverbrook Art Gallery). ✆ **506/454-5192.**

WHERE TO STAY

In addition to the properties listed below, a clutch of motels and chain hotels are bunched up in a bustling mall zone on the hillside above town (along Regent and Prospect sts.), about 10 minutes' drive from downtown.

The dependable local entrant in this pack is the **Fredericton Inn,** 1315 Regent St. (✆ **800/561-8**777 or 506/455-1430), situated in between two malls. It's a typical soothing-music-and-floral-carpeting sort of place that does a brisk business in the convention

trade. But with its indoor pool, nice little whirlpool, and surprising fitness center, it's an adequate overnight stay for vacation travelers, as well—and the price is right. Peak season rates run from C$99 to C$135 for a double room, up to C$199 for an apartment or suite.

The Carriage House Inn ★ Finds Fredericton's premier B&B is a short stroll from the riverfront pathway, in a quiet residential neighborhood—and B&B travelers love it. A former mayor and local lumber baron built the imposing three-story Victorian home in 1875; inside, it's all dark wood trim, deep colors, floral-printed sofas, and a few steep stairs. Rooms—nine of which are queen-bedded, one of which is double-bedded—are furnished with plenty of period art and antiques; some public areas of the inn are so cluttered with these artifacts, in fact, that you feel you're actually inside a museum instead of a hotel. High-speed Wi-Fi is available in the house, and delicious big breakfasts are included with the rate; they're served in the sunny ballroom at the rear of the mansion by bilingual hosts, who get raves far and wide for their hospitality. This is not a luxury inn, but it's a very restful place if you're the sort who doesn't mind sleeping in historic old homes. And, helpfully, it's open year-round.

230 University Ave., Fredericton, NB E3B 4H7. ✆ **800/267-6068** or 506/452-9924. Fax 506/452-2770. www.carriagehouse-inn.net. 10 units. C$99–C$129 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. "Small, well-trained pets" allowed. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

Crowne Plaza Fredericton Lord Beaverbrook Hotel ★ Kids This hulking waterfront hotel looks boxy and dour from the street. But inside, the mood lightens, thanks to interesting composite stone floors, Georgian pilasters, and happy chandeliers. The indoor pool and recreation area downstairs are positively whimsical, a sort of tiki-room grotto motif that kids love. Guest rooms are appointed with traditional reproduction furniture in dark wood—freshened up since Crowne Plaza acquired the property—though the standard, lowest-priced rooms can be somewhat dim and most windows don't open (ask for a room with windows that do open if that's important to you). However, the suites here are spacious, and many have excellent river views. Some Jacuzzi suites have now been added, but this is still an old-fashioned hotel at its heart; those looking for a more modern feel should check out the Delta (see below) before booking. There are several choices for dining: The **Terrace Room** is the main dining area, with an indoor gazebo, tapestries, and a deck overlooking the river. The more intimate **Governor's Room** has higher aspirations, with French-inflected dinner entrees. Finally, the **Maverick Room** (once known as the James Joyce Irish Pub) is the spot for a pint and a snack.

659 Queen St., Fredericton, NB E3B 5A6. ✆ **877/579-7666** or 506/455-3371. Fax 506/455-1441. www.cpfredericton.com. 168 units. $109–$199 double; suites up to $599. Packages available. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; pub; babysitting; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units).

Delta Fredericton ★★ This resort hotel, built only in 1992, occupies a prime location on the river about a 10-minute walk from downtown via the riverfront pathway. In summer, life revolves around an outdoor pool (with its own poolside bar) on a deck overlooking the river. Sundays the lobby is taken over by an over-the-top brunch buffet. Though obviously up to date, the Delta's interior is done with classical styling; some suites are positively huge, and some come with Jacuzzis and river balconies. The hotel's lounge is an active and popular nightspot, especially on weekends. Across the lobby is **Bruno's Seafood & Chophouse,** a good alternative to the restaurants downtown. The

chef usually cooks with whatever's fresh at the farmer's market; look for seasonal and regional specialties (even fiddleheads in early summer), local vegetables and fruits in season, and good steaks.

225 Woodstock Rd., Fredericton, NB E3B 2H8. ✆ **888/462-8800** or 506/457-7000. Fax 506/457-7000. www.deltafredericton.com. 222 units. C$119–C$219 double; suites C$249–C$800. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Pets accepted. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; babysitting; fitness room; Jacuzzi; heated indoor pool and heated outdoor pool; room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, fridge (some units), Jacuzzi (some units).

On the Pond Country Retreat & Spa ★ (Finds) In 1999, On the Pond opened about 15 minutes west of Fredericton to fill a gap in local lodgings: a comfortable retreat where guests could take spa treatments and also enjoy the adjacent provincial park's natural beauty. The lodge itself is lovely, with dark wood trim, slate floors in the entryways, fieldstone fireplaces, and two downstairs common rooms—one with a wood fireplace, one lined with bookshelves—where guests hang out and mingle. Guest rooms upstairs feature queen beds and a woodland theme; they're a bit larger than your average hotel room, with nice extras such as bathrobes and duvets. The spa is in the basement and offers massage, a hot tub, a sauna, an aesthetics room (manicures, pedicures, and facials), and a fitness center. There's also Wi-Fi access throughout.

Notably, the lodge sits on "The Arm"—an impoundment of the Saint John River behind the nearby hydroelectric dam—in a marshy setting better for bird-watching than swimming. (Beach swimming is available across the road at the provincial park.) The Kings Landing Historical Settlement (see "Attractions Outside of Town," above) is nearby.

20 Scotch Settlement Rd. (Rte. 615), Mactaquac, NB E6L 1M2. ✆ **800/984-2555** or 506/363-3420. Fax 506/363-3479. www.onthepond.com. 8 units. C$125–C$145 double. Packages available. MC, V. Drive west of Fredericton on Woodstock Rd.; cross Mactaquac Dam and continue to Esso station; turn right and look for sign on right. No children. **Amenities:** Jacuzzi; sauna; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV/VCR, hair dryer.

WHERE TO DINE

Brewbakers ★★ ITALIAN Brewbakers is a fun pub, cafe, and restaurant on three levels in a cleverly adapted downtown building. It's a bustling and informal spot—a meeting spot of sorts for the town—creatively cluttered with art and artifacts. Lunch hours and early evenings get very busy. The cafe section is quieter, as is a mezzanine dining room above the cafe, while the third floor bustles with the open kitchen. Lunch features sandwiches that get fancier every year: smoked salmon, pulled pork, triple-cream Brie, and oven-roasted peppers with garlicky mayo are just samples of what might be on the card. For dinner, pastas are the main attraction, served up with the usual array of sauces, and recent years have brought haute cuisine (a maple-curry-chicken-cream pasta is just one offering). Other good nighttime choices include pizzas, pan-roasted scallops, strip loin, and herb-crusted tenderloin. The cocktail menu has been expanded to take in some Asian- and martini-influenced libations, too—this place is almost hip now.

546 King St. ✆ **506/459-0067.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$8–C$16 at lunch, C$18–C$28 at dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri 11:30am–11pm; Sat 4–11pm; Sun 4–10pm.

Dimitri's Souvlaki (Value) GREEK Dimitri's is hard to find and easy to walk past. But the generic, chain-restaurant interior belies decent cooking for budget-conscious diners. You'll get a big plate of food here without spending a lot of money. Greek specialties include moussaka (with and without meat), souvlaki, and *dolmades.* Deluxe dinner plates are served with excellent potatoes—hearty wedges cooked crispy on the outside, yet hot and soft within.

349 King St. (in Piper's Lane area). ✆ **506/452-8882.** Main courses C$8–C$18. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–10pm.

FREDERICTON AFTER DARK

Fredericton's downtown is often lively with university students and young professionals after hours. Your best bet is the **Lunar Rogue Pub** ★★, 625 King St. (✆ **506/450-2065**), which features more than 100 single-malt whiskeys, a dozen draft beers, and the requisite grub (mostly fried food and burgers) in a comfortable, pubby atmosphere. It was anointed "Greatest Whisky Bar in the World" by *Whisky* magazine, who should know what they're talking about. Its patio is popular in warm weather. The pub is open 9am to 1am weekdays, from 10am Saturdays and from 11am to 10pm Sundays.

Dolan's Pub, 349 King St. (✆ **506/454-7474**), is the place to go for live Maritime music, which is on tap most Thursdays through Saturdays. Also on tap is the city's largest selection of microbrews. It's open from lunchtime all the way until 2am.

ROAD TRIP TO GAGETOWN ★★

About 56km (35 miles) southeast of Fredericton is the village of **Gagetown,** a scenic driving detour en route to or from Saint John. It's been named one of the 10 prettiest villages in Canada, and has somehow remained largely unchanged through the years—still backed by farm fields on one side, and cozied up to by Gagetown Creek, a placid inlet off the Saint John River, on another. The peaceful surroundings and simple country architecture here have attracted craftspeople and artists, who have settled here and slowly made it over into a quiet arts colony—quaint and creative, but never annoyingly so. Look for low-key enterprises like art galleries, a cafe, a decoy carver, bookstore, cider press, crafts cooperative, and several potters.

You can also **bird-watch** and explore here; the region is noted for avian life, with a wide range of birds enjoying the local marshes, forests, and fields. (Nearly 150 species of bird have been reliably identified in and around Gagetown.) Where to do it? **Gagetown Island** is just offshore and easily accessible by kayak or canoe, which some local inns provide. The island is about 405 hectares (a thousand acres) in size and features a glacial deposit that rises some 23m (75 ft.) high, plus the ruins of a stone house dating from the early 19th century. That's all nice, but birders go for the osprey-viewing platform.

While in town, drop by the **Queens County Museum** (✆ **506/488-2966;** www.qchsm.com), birthplace of Sir Samuel Leonard Tilley, one of the fathers of Canadian Confederation. The 1786 home, located at 69 Front St., is open to the public daily from mid-June through mid-September; admission costs C$3 per person, free for children under 12. You can also buy a pass here (C$5 to C$7, free for children) allowing access to several more of the town's historic homes including the Flower House and a simple courthouse.

If you want to stay the night, check with the simple bed-and-breakfast in town, the **Step Aside B&B** (✆ **506/488-1808**) at 58 Front St. Owners Elaine & Maurice Harquail maintain four rooms costing from C$70 to C$100 per night, and their inn's open year-round.

7 FUNDY NATIONAL PARK ★★

The **Fundy Coast** (between Saint John and Alma) is for the most part wild, remote, and unpopulated. It's criss-crossed by few roads other than the Fundy Drive, making it difficult to explore deeply—unless you happen to have brought a boat with you, which I'm

guessing you didn't. The best access to this coast is at **Fundy National Park,** a gem of a destination that's hugely popular in summer with travelers of an outdoors bent. Families often settle in here for a week or so, filling their days with activities in and around the park such as hiking, sea kayaking, biking, and splashing around in a seaside pool.

Nearby there are also some lovely drives, plus an innovative adventure center at **Cape Enrage.** You can even vary your adventuring according to the weather: if a muffling fog moves in and smothers the coastline (and it might), head inland for a hike to a waterfall through lush forest. If it's a day of brilliant sunshine, on the other hand, venture along the rocky shores by foot, bike, or boat, and bring a camera.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Route 114 runs through the center of Fundy National Park. If you're coming from the west, follow the prominent national park signs just east of **Sussex**. If you're coming from Prince Edward Island or Nova Scotia, head southward on Route 114 from Moncton.

VISITOR INFORMATION The park's main **Visitor Centre** (✆ **506/887-6000**) is located just inside the **Alma** (eastern) entrance to the park. The stone building is open daily during peak season from 8am to 10pm, and until 4:30pm the rest of the year. You can watch a video presentation, peruse a handful of exhibits on wildlife and tides, and shop at the nicely stocked nature bookstore. The smaller **Wolfe Lake Information Centre** (✆ **506/432-6026**) is at the park's western entrance; it's open until 6pm daily, from late June through late August.

The small town of **Alma** also maintains a seasonal information center at 8584 Main St. (✆ **506/887-6127**), open from late spring through September.

FEES Park entry fees are charged from mid-May to mid-October. The fee is C$7.80 adults, C$6.80 seniors, C$3.90 children ages 6 to 16, and C$20 families. Seasonal and annual passes are also available.

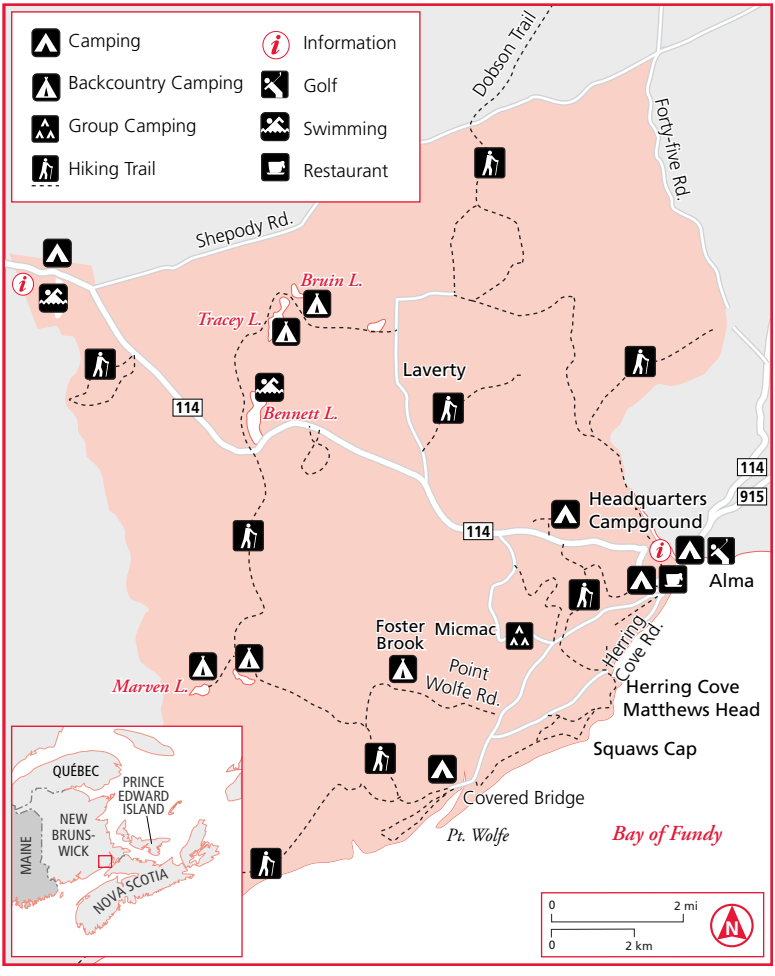
EXPLORING FUNDY NATIONAL PARK

Most national park activities are centered around the Alma (eastern) side of the park, where the park entrance has a cultivated and manicured air, as if part of a landed estate. Here you'll find stone walls, well-tended lawns, and attractive landscaping, along with a golf course, amphitheater, lawn bowling, and tennis.

Also in this area is a **heated saltwater pool,** set near the bay with a sweeping ocean view. There's a lifeguard on duty, and it's a popular destination for families. The pool is open from late June through early September. Entrance costs C$3.40 adults, C$2.90 seniors, C$1.65 children, and C$8.80 for families.

Sea kayaking tours are a great way to get an up-close look at the marine environment here—but you want expert help when kayaking the world's highest tides. **FreshAir Adventure** (✆ **800/545-0020** or 506/887-2249) in Alma offers tours that range from 2 hours to several days. The half-day tours explore marsh and coastline (C$48–C$60 per person, including snack); the full-day adventure includes a hot meal and 6 hours of exploring the wild shores (C$90–C$110 per person).

Birders are always pleased to learn that some 250-plus species have been sighted within park boundaries, and almost half of them breed here. Notably, the endangered peregrine falcon has been reintroduced to the bay's steep cliffs.



Hiking

The park maintains miles and miles of scenic trails for hikers and walkers, with good signage and stairs where necessary. These range from a 20-minute loop to a 4-hour trek, and they pass through varied terrain. The trails are arranged such that several can be linked into a full 48km (30-mile) backpacker's loop, dubbed the **Fundy Circuit** (which typically requires 3 to 5 nights camping in the backcountry; preregistration is required, so check in at the visitor center if you're serious about doing it).

Among the most accessible hikes is the **Caribou Plain Trail** ★, a 3km (2-mile) loop that provides a wonderful introduction to the local terrain. You hike along a beaver pond,

across a raised peat bog via boardwalk, then through lovely temperate forest. Read the interpretive signs to learn about deadly "flarks" which lurk in bogs and can swallow a moose whole.

The **Third Vault Falls Trail** ★★ is an 8km (5-mile), in-and-back hike that takes you to the park's highest waterfall (it's about 14m/46 ft. high). The trail is largely a flat stroll through leafy woodlands—until you begin a steady descent into a mossy gorge. You round a corner and there you are, suddenly facing the cataract. How cool is that?

All the park's trails are covered in the pullout trail guide you'll find in *Salt & Fir,* the visitors' guide you receive when you pay your entry fee at the gatehouse.

Biking

The roads east of Alma offer superb bicycling terrain, at least if you get off busy Route 114. Especially appealing is **Route 915** ★ from Riverside-Albert to Alma; combined with a detour to Cape Enrage, it makes for lovely touring. Along this scenic road you'll pedal through rolling farmland and scattered settlements, past vistas of salt marshes (as well as the wonderfully named Ha Ha Cemetery). The hills here look low, but they get steep in spots and require a serious grind at times; you should be in reasonable shape. Route 915 runs for about 27km (17 miles) in all; the detour to Cape Enrage adds about 13km (8 miles).

Also note that the park allows **mountain biking** on six trails: Goose River, Marven Lake, Black Hole, Bennett Brook (to the top of Point Wolfe valley), East Branch (must take right-hand side trail only, and return from river on same path), and Maple Grove. These first two trails are *steep;* be prepared.

Bike rentals have not been available in Alma in recent years, but check with the Alma visitor information center (see "Visitor Information," above) to see if the situation has changed. Otherwise, bikes can be rented in Saint John or Moncton.

Camping

The national park maintains four drive-in campgrounds and about 15 backcountry sites. The two main campgrounds are near the Alma entrance. **Headquarters Campground** ★ is within walking distance of Alma, the saltwater pool, and numerous other attractions. Since it overlooks the bay, this campground tends to be cool and subject to fogs. **Chignecto North Campground** ★ is higher on the hillside, sunnier, and warmer. You can hike down to Alma on an attractive hiking trail in 1 to 2 hours. Both campgrounds have hookups for RVs, flush toilets, and showers, and both can be reserved in advance online (✆ **877/737-3783;** www.pccamping.ca); sites cost C$16 to C$35 per night, depending on services offered.

The **Point Wolfe** and **Wolfe Lake** campgrounds lack RV hookups and are slightly more primitive, but they are the preferred destinations for campers seeking a quieter camping experience. Rates at Point Wolfe, where showers and flush toilets are available, are about C$25 and it too can be reserved online via Canada's national parks campground website at **www.pccamping.ca**. Wolfe Lake lacks showers and has only pit toilets—thus a night there costs only about C$16. Call the park directly to reserve.

Backcountry sites are scattered throughout the park, with only one located directly on the coast (at the confluence of the coast and Goose River). Ask at the visitor centers for more information or to reserve a site (mandatory). Backcountry camping fees are about C$10 per person per night.

ROAD TRIP TO CAPE ENRAGE ★★

Cape Enrage is a blustery and bold cape that juts out into Chignecto Bay. It's home to a wonderful adventure center that could be a model for centers worldwide. It costs C$10 per vehicle or C$4 per person to enter the cape, but the real draw here is its adventure center.

Cape Enrage Adventures ★ traces its roots to 1993, when a group of high school students from Moncton decided to arrest the decay of the cape's historic lighthouse, which had been abandoned a few years earlier. They put together a plan to restore the light and keeper's quarters and establish an adventure center. And it worked. Today, with the help of experts in rock climbing, rappelling, and local history, a few dozen high-school students staff and run this program throughout the summer months. (The program closes in late August, when the student-managers have to head back to high school.)

Part of what makes the program so notable is its flexibility. You can pick and choose from day adventures, which are scheduled throughout the summer, as though from a menu. Prices vary; you might pay about C$55 per person for a 2-hour rock-climbing or rappelling workshop.

Families looking to endure outdoor hardships together should inquire about **custom adventures.** For something like C$200 to C$300 per person, the center can draw up a 2- to 5-night adventure vacation that includes equipment, instruction, food, and lodging.

For more information about the program, contact **Cape Enrage Adventures** (✆ **888/280-7273** or 506/887-2273; www.capenrage.com).

ROAD TRIP TO THE HOPEWELL ROCKS

There's no better place in Canada to witness the extraordinary power of ocean tides than at the **Hopewell Rocks** ★★★ (✆ **877/734-3429;** www.thehopewellrocks.ca), located about 40km (25 miles) northeast of Fundy National Park on Route 114. Think of it as a natural sculpture garden. At low tide (the best time to visit), these eroded columns as high as 15m (50 feet) stand on the ocean floor like Brancusi or Easter Island statues, and you can walk right out among them and gawk. (They're sometimes called the "flowerpots," on account of the trees and plants that still flourish on their narrowing summits.) But don't linger: Most of those rocks will be under water in a few hours.

When you arrive, park at the visitor center and restaurant and wander down to the shore. (There's also a shuttle service that runs from the interpretive center to the rocks for a small fee.) Signboards fill you in on the natural history of the rocks. If you've come at low tide, you can descend the steel staircase to the sea floor and admire these wondrous free-standing rock sculptures, chiseled by waves and tides.

Even the **visitor center** is a pleasant place to spend some time. It not only has intriguing exhibits (look for the satellite photos of the area, and a time-lapse video of the tides) but the cafeteria-style restaurant has terrific views from its floor-to-ceiling windows and serves good, simple food.

The park charges an entry fee of C$8.50 adults, C$7.25 students and seniors, C$6.25 children ages 5 to 18, and C$23 families. It's open daily mid-May to mid-June, 9am to 5pm, then 8am to 8pm from mid-June until mid-August (mid-Aug to late Aug to 6pm only), and from 9am to 5pm from September until it closes in mid-October. Note that the site can get crowded at peak times, which is understandable given its uniqueness and beauty, but might not jive with your ideal of peace and quiet. If your schedule allows it, come early in the day, when most travelers are still in bed.

If you arrive at the top half of the tide, consider a sea kayak tour around the islands and caves. **Baymount Outdoor Adventures** (✆ **877/601-2660** or 506/734-2660) runs 90-minute kayak tours of Hopewell Rocks from June through early September for C$55 per adult, C$45 per child, or C$180 per family. Caving tours of nearby caverns are also offered by this family outfit; contact them for details.

WHERE TO STAY

Broadleaf Guest Ranch ★ Kids The two-bedroom cottages at this homey, family-operated ranch are a great choice for families or couples traveling together, particularly those with an interest in horses: The ranch offers rides of varying duration; cattle checks; even some basic spa packages. (Think of it as a dude ranch without the snakes.) Cottages here sport full kitchens, small sitting areas with gas stoves, and lovely sweeping views of the 607-hectare (1,500-acre) ranch property and bay. You won't mistake these lodgings for a luxury experience: Bedrooms are furnished with bunkbeds (a single over a double). While un-fancy, staying here is like sinking into a favorite chair: comforting. So is the home-cooking that Broadleaf dishes up in a large, cafeteria-style dining area. In addition to the cottages, there are three simple bed-and-breakfast rooms in the main house, a little 9-site campground (with hookups) in an apple orchard, and an annex known as "Broadleaf Too."

5526 Rte. 114, Hopewell Hill NB E4H 3N5. ✆ **800/226-5405** or 506/882-2349. Fax 506/882-2075. www.broadleafranch.com. 7 units. Main inn rooms C$60 double; chalets and apartments C$150–C$200. Packages available. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bike rentals; room service; spa; watersports equipment. *In room:* TV/VCR (some units), kitchenette (some units), no phone.

Fundy Highlands Inn and Chalets ★ Kids This property's 24 cottages—managed by provincial natives Doug and Donna Stewart—are furnished with color televisions, beach towels, and kitchenette units. Some of the cottages even have built-in bunk beds, a good choice for travelers with young children. It's also notable for its grounds, rose beds, and good views of the bay and coastline from many of the cottages' windows. If the chalets are all fully booked up, the same owners run the adjacent **Fundy Park Motel,** with 20 basic rooms for C$69 to C$89 each; all of the motel rooms have kitchenettes, too, and second-floor rooms have a veranda. Just be aware that all rooms in the motel are furnished with bunk beds only.

8714 Rte. 114, Fundy National Park, NB E4H 4V3. ✆ **877/883-8639** or 506/887-2930. www.fundyhighlandchalets.com. 24 units. Cottages C$79–$C105. Packages available. MC, V. *In room:* TV, kitchenette.

Parkland Village Inn Value The small Parkland (just five units) opened the same day that the park did, back in 1948. It's an old-fashioned seaside hotel in the village of Alma, offering suites that have been somewhat modernized and thinly furnished in budget-motel style. Some rooms have been set up as two-bedroom units, others with a sitting room and bedroom. All have fine views of the bay. It's far from deluxe, but is handy to the park and offers good value for families. A dining room, **The Tides,** specializes in seafood, prepared simply, and has pretty good views out over the water.

8601 Main St. (Rte. 114), Alma, NB E4H 1N6. ✆ **866/668-4337** or 506/887-2313. Fax 506/887-2315. www.parklandvillageinn.com. 5 units. C$75–C$135 double. MC, V. Closed Dec–Apr. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* TV, Jacuzzi (some units), no phone.

Vista Ridge ★ These simple cabins are set amid birch and pines very near the park's eastern entrance, on a pretty little site overlooking a beach and the headlands of the park (hence the name). Ownership has put in the elbow grease to update its cottages with the

times, installing satellite televisions, electric fireplaces, and full kitchens in all of the units. These cottages are very small and basically furnished, but they do have lots of exposed wood and those good kitchen appliances; bring food and cook it up on site. You can also horseback ride on the beach, guided by the family of equestrian enthusiasts who run this property, for as little as C$25 for a half-hour ride. There's an RV campground on site, too—call the owners for more details if you're seeking a scenic place to park a big rig.

41 Foster Rd., Alma, NB E4H 4Y8. ✆ **877/887-2808** or 506/887-2808. Fax 506/887-2282. www.fundyparkchalets.com. 29 cabins. C$99-C$125 cabin. Discounts in spring and fall. MC, V. Closed Dec–Apr. Pets accepted (C$10 per pet). *In room:* TV, fireplace (some units), kitchenette, no phone.

WHERE TO DINE

Amid the scattering of seafood takeout and lobster shops in and around the park, one good picnic pick is **Butland's** (✆ **506/887-2190;** www.fundylobster.com) at 8607 Main St. in Alma beside the town wharf. They sell locally caught crustaceans, scallops, and smoked salmon. You can cook the lobster yourself in your cabin, or have these guys do it; there are no tables here. The shack is open daily from mid-May through Labor Day, then weekends until New Year's.

There's also a bakery in Alma, **Kelly's Bake Shop,** at 8587 Main St. (✆ **506/887-2460**), open year-round. They serve big, locally famous sticky buns.

8 MONCTON

Moncton makes a claim that it's the crossroads of the Maritimes, and it hasn't been bashful about using this lucky geographic position (it *is* at the crossing of several major highways) to promote itself as a regional business hub. As a result, the majority of downtown's hotels and restaurants here cater to people in suits, rather than travelers, at least on the weekdays. But there is some life here; take a walk down Main Street at night or on a weekend, and you'll spot spiky hairdos, flannel, skateboards, and other youthful fashion accouterments.

For families, Moncton offers a decent way station if you're traveling with kids. A concentration of family-friendly attractions, including **Magnetic Hill** and **Crystal Palace** (see "Exploring Moncton," below), offer entertaining—if somewhat pricey—ways to fill an idle afternoon.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Moncton is at the crossroads of several major routes through New Brunswick, including Route 2 (the Trans-Canada Hwy.) and Route 15.

Moncton's small **international airport** (www.gmia.ca) is about 11km (7 miles, or 10 minutes) from downtown via Route 132; you basically head straight out Main St. and cross the river. (From the airport, take Rue Champlain straight into town.) **Air Canada** (✆ **888/AIR-CANA** [247-2262]; www.aircanada.com) has long served the city, and Canadian carrier **WestJet** (✆ **888/937-8538;** www.westjet.com) now also connects Moncton with Toronto and other points in Canada. From the U.S., **Continental** (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com) flies to and from Newark daily. At last count, there were four international-chain car rental agencies at the airport.

The **VIA Rail** (✆ **888/842-7245;** www.viarail.com) *Ocean* train from Montréal to Halifax stops in Moncton 6 days a week. Moncton's station is located on Main Street, next to Highfield Square.

VISITOR INFORMATION There's a downtown visitor information center located centrally in **Bore Park,** just off Main Street at 10 Bendview Court (✆ **506/853-3540**), open daily from mid-May through September. The city's tourism website is located at **www.gomoncton.com**.

EXPLORING MONCTON

Moncton's downtown is easily reconnoitered on foot—if you can find parking. (Look for lots a block just north and south of Main St.) **Downtown Moncton, Inc.,** publishes a nicely designed "Historic Walking Tour" brochure that touches upon some of the most significant buildings; ask for it at the visitor center.

The most active stretch of Main Street is the section between City Hall and the train underpass: an accumulation of cafes, newsstands, hotels, and restaurants, plus a handful of shops. There's also quite a mix of architectural styles here, the earliest examples of which testify to Moncton's former prosperity and prominence as a regional center of commerce.

Exploring by bike is a good idea, especially if you go pedaling along **Riverfront Park** or through the 121 hectares (300 acres) of popular **Centennial Park**. The local bike club Hub City Wheelers sometimes schedules group bike rides, which nonmembers are welcome to join; it's a good way to meet local cyclists and find the most scenic routes. Ask about the rides at the visitor center.

Crystal Palace ★ (Kids) The indoor amusement park at Crystal Palace can make a rainy day with the kids go by quickly. The spacious, enclosed park includes a four-screen cinema, shooting arcades, numerous games (ranging from Skee-Ball to video games), a medium-size roller coaster, a carousel, swing ride, laser tag, bumper cars, miniature airplane and truck rides, miniature golf, batting cages, and even a virtual-reality ride. The park especially appeals to kids under the age of 12, though teens will likely find a few video games to occupy them, too. Families can stay virtually inside the park by booking a room at the adjoining Ramada Plaza Crystal Palace Hotel (see "Where to Stay," below).

At Champlain Place Shopping Centre (Trans-Canada Hwy., exit 504-A W.), 499 Paul St., Dieppe. ✆ **506/859-4386** or 877/856-4386 (eastern Canada only). www.crystalpalace.ca. Free admission. Rides are 1–4 tickets each (book of 25 C$23); unlimited ride bracelets C$23 adults, C$20 children shorter than 4 ft., C$73 families. Game tokens C$20 per 100. Late June to early Sept daily 10am–10pm; rest of year Mon–Thurs noon–8pm, Fri noon–9pm, Sat 10am–9pm, Sun 10am–8pm.

Magic Mountain Water Park ★ (Kids) This water park, adjacent to famous/infamous Magnetic Hill (see below), features wave pools and numerous slides, including the towering Kamikaze Slide, where daredevils can reach speeds of up to 40 miles per hour. (Yes, it's safe.) Your kids can also race their friends side-by-side down a slide on a tube or mat (sign me up) and play miniature golf at the site. Little kids might be more interested in the Splashpad, a somewhat more passive attraction that sprays water in four directions from a plastic whale, boat, and lighthouse onto your shrieking kids.

2875 Mountain Rd. (Trans-Canada Hwy., exit 488), Moncton. ✆ **800/331-9283** or 506/857-9283. www.magicmountain.ca. Admission C$24 adults full day, C$13–C$18 children under 4 ft. tall (children under age 3 free), C$79 families. Afternoon tickets (enter after 3pm) about 33% lower. July–late Aug daily 10am–7pm; mid-June to end of June and late Aug to early Sept, daily 10am–6pm.

Magnetic Hill (Kids) Magnetic Hill, located on Moncton's northwest outskirts, began as a quirk of geography. Cars that stopped at the bottom of a short stretch of downhill started to roll back uphill—or *appeared* to do so. In fact, it's an optical illusion. (The

"hill" is on the side of a far larger hill tilted at a different angle, so that skews your perspective.) Starting in the 1930s, locals capitalized on the phenomenon by opening gift shops; by the 1950s, this hill boasted the biggest souvenir shop in the Maritimes. Today it's not so quaint; you enter a well-marked drive with magnet-themed road signs and streetlights, pay a toll at a gatehouse, and wind around a comically twisting road to wait your turn before being directed to the hill. You might find this "uphill roll" entertaining for a few meters while you scratch your head and wonder how it can be real. And attractions within a few hundred yards include Wharf Village (souvenir shops and snack bars designed to look like a seaside village); a popular **zoo** ★; video arcades, driving ranges, and the like; and the Magic Mountain water park (see above). Despite—maybe because of—its utter cheesiness, this is a decent stop for families weary of beaches and hikes. If you don't mind forking over a few bucks to roll "up" a hill, that is.

Mountain Rd. (Trans-Canada Hwy., exit 488), Moncton. No phone. Admission Magnetic Hill C$5 per car, free if the gate is open and unstaffed; Magnetic Hill Zoo C$9.50 adults, C$8.50 seniors and children 12–18, C$6.50 children 4–11, C$22 families in summer, cheaper off-season. June–Oct Mon–Fri 10am–6pm, weekends 9am–6pm; off season some attractions closed, call for info. Closed Nov to mid-May.

WHERE TO STAY

In addition to the properties listed below, a welter of inexpensive and mid-priced chain hotels have set up shop near the complex of services around Magnetic Hill. They include the **Comfort Inn,** 2495 Mountain Rd. (✆ **800/228-5150** or 506/384-3175); **Country Inn & Suites,** 2475 Mountain Rd. (✆ **800/596-2375** or 506/852-7000); and **Holiday Inn Express,** also just off the exit at 2515 Mountain Rd. (✆ **866/570-7666** or 506/384-1050). Double rooms range from as little as C$65 up to as high as C$199, though they tend toward the lower end of that range. To get here from the Trans-Canada Hwy, take exit 450.

Delta Beauséjour ★ The downtown Delta Beauséjour, constructed in the 1970s, is boxy, bland, and concrete (what else would you expect from the '70s?), and the entrance courtyard is somewhat sterile and off-putting. But inside, the decor is more inviting. Rooms are appointed in usual business-hotel style; a third-floor indoor pool offers year-round swimming, while a pleasant outdoor deck overlooks the distant marshes of the Petitcodiac River. The hotel is a favorite among corporate travelers, but in summer and on weekends leisure travelers largely get it to themselves. In addition to the elegant **Windjammer** restaurant (dinner only; see "Where to Dine," below), the hotel also has **Triiio** (a restaurant/lounge serving three meals a day) and a cafeteria space serving breakfast, lunch, and snacks all day.

750 Main St., Moncton, NB E1C 1E6. ✆ **888/351-7666** or 506/854-4344. Fax 506/858-0957. www.deltahotels.com. 310 units. C$129–C$199 double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 3 restaurants; bar; babysitting; fitness center; indoor heated pool; 24-hr. room service.. *In room:* A/C, TV, fax (some units), minibar.

Ramada Plaza Moncton ★ Finds This modern, three-story chain hotel adjoins the Crystal Palace amusement park (see above), a short walk from the region's largest mall. As such, it's surrounded by acres of asphalt and has little in the way of native charm. Most rooms are modern (a number are suites), unexceptional but well furnished with amenities like mini-fridges and minibars. But there's a surprise here: a handful of "fantasy suites" that go way over the top with themes like "Deserted Island" (you sleep in a thatched hut) and "Rock 'n' Roll" (you sleep in a bed that's a replica of a pink '59 Cadillac). This is corny kitschy hostelry the way it used to be. Some of this Ramada's rooms face the hotel's

tropics-themed indoor pool, but others face that vast parking lot, so book carefully. For entertainment, there's the amusement park right outside the hotel, obviously. The hotel's restaurant, McGinnis Landing, serves basic pub grub and buffet brunches. It's a bit pricey, but the restaurant does cater well to kids' appetites. Some of the hotel's package offerings include tickets to the amusement park.

499 P aul St., Dieppe , NB E1A 6S5. ✆ **800/561-7108** or 506/858-8584. F ax 506/858-5486. w ww.crystal palacehotel.com. 115 units. C$90–C$275 double. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; r oom service; sauna *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, minibar.

WHERE TO DINE

If you're visiting this area in summer, also check out the seasonal (mid-May through mid-October) restaurants that spring up along **Pointe-du-Chêne wharf** ★, a marina complex on the waterfront in **Shediac** about 24km (15 miles) east of the city via routes 11 and 15. You'll find everything from fish and chips to barbecue to ice cream here—even some adult beverages.

City Grill ★ CANADIAN Once an Australian-themed steakhouse, this popular downtown eatery totally recast itself in 2008 with a quieter, more refined vibe. Gone are the oversized steak knives and boomerangs replaced with prints of city skylines and a black-and-white color scheme. The kitchen now integrates some of the old (steaks are still very much on the menu) with much healthier choices such as salads, pizzas, and food cooked over one of eastern Canada's only working charcoal grills—hence the name.

130 Westmoreland St. ✆ **506/857-8325.** Call-ahead seating in lieu of r eservations. Lunches C$9–C$15; dinners C$17–C$28. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–2pm and 5–10pm; F ri 11:30am–2pm and 5–11pm; Sat 5–11pm.

The W indjammer ★★ SEAFOOD/CONTINENTAL Tucked off the lobby of Moncton's top business hotel is The Windjammer. This is probably the city's best restaurant—and some Canadian observers consider it one of the country's top hotel eateries. With its heavy wood and nautical theme, it resembles the private officers' mess of an exclusive ship. But this is no fish-and-chips joint. Chef Stefan Müller's menu is ambitious, with appetizers like seafood chowder, smoked lobster tails, a cold seafood "martini," and mussels steamed in apple wine. Entrees from the sea might include a garlicky-gingery filet of salmon, some herb-rubbed Arctic char, a pan-roasted black cod, or lobster cooked whichever way you like it. The chef also serves land-based fare such as bison steak, veal chops, oven-roasted rack of lamb, maple-and-cherry-glazed duck, and a beef tenderloin flambé prepared right at tableside (flames and all) and then garnished with a peppercorn sauce. It's expensive for New Brunswick, but an excellent find in an unlikely place.

750 Main St. (inside the Delta Beauséjour). ✆ **506/877-7137.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$20–C$42. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 5:30–10pm.

EN ROUTE TO KOUCHIBOUGUAC NATIONAL PARK

If you decide to head directly to Kouchibouguac from Moncton, **Bouctouche Dune** ★★ makes for a good stop along the way. To reach the dune, take Route 15 east out of Moncton, then turn north on Route 11 at its intersection with **Shediac.** The drive takes about an hour, however.

This striking white sand dune stretches an impressive 13km (8 miles) across **Bouctouche Bay;** it's home to the endangered piping plover, a unique butterfly species, and some rare plants. The sensitive dune area itself can be viewed from a wheelchair-accessible, 2km (mile-plus) boardwalk that snakes along its length. On a sunny day, the sandy beach

is a lovely spot to while away a couple hours, or even take a dip in the (relatively) warm seawater. The visitor center is fairly straightforward in its explanations of the flora and fauna indigenous to the dune; kids will probably be amused. There are also regular ranger programs here. Admission is free; the boardwalk is open year-round (in good weather) and the visitor center is open daily from 10am to 8pm (until 5pm in the off season). Contact the dune's visitor center (administered by the Irving Oil folks) at ✆ **888/640-3300** or 506/743-2600.

If you're interested in spending the night in the area or grabbing a bite to eat, check out the **Dune View Inn** ★ at 589 Rte. 875 (✆ **877/743-9893** or 506/743-9893; www.aubergevuedeladune.com). It's open year-round, where the owners (one a trained chef who previously cooked in Montréal) serve up French-inflected local seafood. The six units here feature TVs, telephones, and private bathrooms (one with a Jacuzzi); they're pretty and light, if somewhat cramped. A double with breakfast costs from C$90 to C$135. The inn can also arrange local golf and kayaking packages, or even a romance package, with advance notice.

9 KOUCHIBOUGUAC NATIONAL PARK ★★

Much is made of the fact that big **Kouchibouguac National Park** (local slang: "the Kooch") has all sorts of ecosystems worth studying, from sandy barrier islands to ancient peat bogs. But that's like saying Disney has nice lakes: It misses the point. In fact, this artfully designed park is a wonderful destination for cycling, hiking, and beach-going, too—yes, it has beaches. If you're an outdoorsy type, plan to spend a few days here doing nothing but exercising. The varied natural wonders (which *are* spectacular) will just be an added bonus—a big one.

The tongue-tangling name is a Mi'kmaq Indian word meaning "river of the long tides." It's pronounced "Koosh-uh-*boog*-oo-whack," or something like that. The place is great for **cyclists,** because the park is laced with well-groomed bike trails made of finely crushed cinders that traverse forest and field or meander alongside rivers and lagoons. In those areas where bikes aren't permitted (such as on boardwalks and beaches), there are usually bike racks handy for locking up while you keep going on foot. In fact, if you camp here and bring a bike, there's no need to even use a car.

The only group this park might disappoint is gung-ho hikers. There isn't any hard-core hiking or climbing, just gentle walking and strolling. The pathways are wide and flat. Most trails are short—on the order of a half-mile to a mile—and seem more like detours than destinations.

Although the park is ideal for **campers,** day-trippers also find it a worthwhile destination. Plan to stay until sunset. The trails tend to empty out in the afternoon, and the dunes, bogs, and boreal forest take on a rich, almost iridescent hue as the sun sinks over the spruce.

Be aware that this is a fair-weather destination only—if it's blustery or rainy or snowy, there's little to do save a damp stroll on the beach. So it's best to save a visit for sunny days; check the weather before visiting, if possible.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Kouchibouguac National Park is located about 112km (70 miles) north of Moncton; figure less than 90 minutes' driving time. The exit for the park, off Route 11, is well marked.

VISITOR INFORMATION The park is open daily from April through November, while a **Visitor Reception Centre** (✆ **506/876-2443**) opens daily from mid-May until mid-October. The visitor center is just off Route 134, a short drive past the park entrance. (It's open from 8am to 8pm from June through August, 9am to 5pm in the shoulder seasons.) There's a slide show here to introduce you to the park's attractions, plus some field guides.

FEES A daily pass costs C$7.80 adults, C$6.80 seniors, C$3.90 children 6 to 16, and C$20 families. (Rates are discounted 50 to 60% from April through June and from October through November.) Seasonal passes are also available, but are only worth the dough if you're planning to visit for more than 3 days. Though there are no formal checkpoints here, occasional roadblocks during the summer check for pass-holding compliance. Note that, for a small extra charge, you can also get a helpful map of the park at the information center.

CAMPING

Kouchibouguac is at heart a camper's park, best enjoyed by those who plan to spend at least a night.

South Kouchibouguac ★, the main campground, is centrally located and very nicely laid out with 300-plus sites, most rather large and private. The 50 or so sites with electricity are nearer the river and somewhat more open, while the newest sites (nos. 1–35) lack grassy areas for pitching a tent—campers there must pitch their tents on gravel pads. Bring a thick sleeping pad or ask for another site. Sites here cost C$22 to C$29 per night, depending on time of year and the level of comfort you require. Reservations are accepted for about half of the sites; call ✆ **506/876-2443** starting in late April. The remaining sites are doled out first-come, first-served.

Other camping options within the park include the more remote, semiprimitive **Côte-à-Fabien,** across the river on Kouchibouguac Lagoon. It lacks showers and some sites require a short walk, but it's more appealing for tenters. The cost is C$16 per night.

The park also maintains three backcountry sites. **Sipu** is on the Kouchibouguac River and is accessible by canoe or foot only, **Petit Large** by foot or bike, and **Pointe-à-Maxime** by canoe or kayak only (no fresh water available at this campground). These sites cost a flat C$9.90 per night.

BEACHES

The park features about 16km (10 miles) of sandy beaches, mostly along barrier islands of sandy dunes, delicate grasses and flowers, and nesting plovers and sandpipers. **Kellys** ★ is the principal beach, one of the best-designed and best-executed recreation areas in eastern Canada. At a forest's edge, a short walk from the main parking area, you can find showers, changing rooms, a snack bar, and some interpretive exhibits. From here, you walk about 480m (⅓-mile) across a winding boardwalk that's plenty fascinating as it crosses a salt marsh, lagoons, and some of the best-preserved dunes in the province.

The long, sandy beach here features water that's comfortably warm, with waves that are usually mellow—they lap rather than roar, unless a storm's passing offshore. Lifeguards oversee a roped-off section about 91m (300 ft.) long; elsewhere, though, you're on your own. For kids, there's supervised swimming on a sandy stretch of the quiet lagoon.

BOATING & BIKING

Ryans ★★ (✆ **506/876-8918**)—a cluster of buildings between the campgrounds and Kellys Beach—is the recreational center where you can rent bikes, kayaks, paddleboats, and canoes seasonally. All rent relatively cheaply, even the double kayaks. Canoes can be rented for longer excursions. And since Ryans is located on a lagoon, you can explore around the dunes or upstream on the winding river.

The park sometimes offers a "Voyageur Canoe Marine Adventure" during summer, with a crew paddling a sizable canoe from the mainland out to offshore sandbars and a naturalist-guide helps identify the wildlife. You'd probably see osprey and bald eagles. It's an inexpensive 3-hour excursion with a nice little wilderness payoff; inquire about these trips at the park's information center when you enter.

HIKING

The hiking and biking trails are as short and undemanding as they are appealing. The one hiking trail that requires slightly more fortitude is the **Kouchibouguac River Trail,** which runs for some 13km (8 miles) along the banks of the river.

The **Bog Trail** ★ runs just 2km (a mile and a quarter) in each direction, but it opens the door to a wonderfully alien world: The 4,500-year-old bog here is a classic domed bog, made of peat created by decaying shrubs and other plants. At the bog's edge you'll find a wooden tower ascended by a spiral staircase that affords a panoramic view of the eerie habitat.

The boardwalk crosses to the thickest, middle part of the bog. Where the boardwalk stops, you can feel the bouncy surface of the bog—you're actually standing on a mat of thick vegetation that's floating on top of water. Look for the pitcher plant, a carnivorous little devil that lures flies into its bell-shaped leaves and then digests them with acid, allowing the plant to thrive in an otherwise hostile environment.

Callanders Beach and **Cedar Trail** ★ are both located at the end of a short dirt road. There's an open field with picnic tables here, a small protected beach on the lagoon (with fine views of dunes across the way), and an 800m (about a half mile or so) hiking trail along a boardwalk that passes through a cedar forest, past a salt marsh, and through a mixed forest. This is a good alternative for those who prefer to avoid the crowds (again, relatively speaking) at Kellys Beach.

10 THE ACADIAN PENINSULA

The **Acadian Peninsula** is the bulge on the northeast corner of New Brunswick, forming one of the arms of the **Baie des Chaleurs** (Québec's Gaspé Peninsula forms the other). It's a land of tidy, nondescript houses, miles of shoreline (much of it beaches), harbors filled with commercial fishing boats, and residents proud of their Acadian heritage. You'll see the Stella Maris flag—the French tricolor with a single gold star in the field of blue—everywhere up here.

One thing it's *not* is wild and remote. On a map it looks like this coastline should be that way, but it's not. Farmhouses dot the roads, and you'll occasionally come upon brilliant meadows of hawkweed or lupine, but this part of the province is more given over to prefab housing on little lots between the sea and boring two-lane highways. Other

than the superb Acadian Village historical museum near Caraquet (see below), there are few organized attractions in this region. It's more a place to unwind while walking on a beach or watching fishing boats than to do heavy-duty sightseeing.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Caraquet Tourism Information,** 35 du Carrefour Ave. (✆ **506/726-2676**), is a seasonal (mid-May through August) office that offers convenient access to other activities in the harbor (see below) and has plenty of parking. The village of **Shippagan** dispenses its information from a wooden lighthouse near the Marine Centre at 200 Hotel de Ville Ave. (✆ **506/336-3993**); it's only open from June through August.

GETTING THERE Route 11 is the main highway serving the Acadian Peninsula. Caraquet is about 260km (160 miles, or 3½ hours' drive) north from Moncton, about 160km (100 miles, or 2-plus hours) north from the entrance to Kouchibouguac National Park.

CARAQUET ★

The historic beach town of Caraquet—widely regarded as the spiritual capital of Acadian New Brunswick—is the town that keeps going and going. (Geographically speaking, anyway.) It's spread thinly along a single commercial boulevard that parallels the beach; this town once claimed the honorific "longest village in the world" when it ran to some 20km (13 miles) long. As a result, Caraquet lacks a well-defined downtown, an urban center of gravity, an identity; there's one stoplight, where Boulevard St-Pierre Est changes to Boulevard St-Pierre Ouest. (Most of the establishments mentioned below are somewhere on this boulevard.)

A good place to start a tour is the **Carrefour de la Mer,** 51 Blvd. St-Pierre Est, a modern complex overlooking the man-made harbor. It has a spare, Scandinavian feel to it, and you'll find the tourist information office (see above), a seafood restaurant, a snack bar, a children's playground, and two short strolls that lead to picnic tables on jetties with fine harbor views.

Village Historique Acadien ★★ New Brunswick sometimes seems awash in Acadian museums and historic villages. But if you only have time to see one, this is the place to visit. Some 45 buildings—most transported from villages elsewhere on the peninsula—depict life as it was lived in Acadian settlements between 1770 and 1890. The buildings are set amongst hundreds of acres of woodlands, marshes, and fields. You'll learn all about the exodus and settlement of the Acadians from costumed guides, who also demonstrate skills ranging from letterpress printing to blacksmithing. Rotating exhibits of local art are also shown each season. And that's not all: The village opened a large addition in 2002 which focuses on more recent eras; this section's buildings (mostly replicas) continue the saga, showing Acadian life from 1890 to 1939 with a special focus on industry. Plan on spending 2 to 4 hours in total on the site. The attractive yellow Chateau Albert Hotel, which houses students enrolled in workshops in traditional Acadian arts and crafts, is also open to the public, and is inexpensive; its simple rooms lack phones and televisions (to fit the period), but there's a dining room, convivial bar area, and lost-in-time vibe.

Rte. 11 (6 miles west of Caraquet). ✆ **506/726-2600.** w www.villagehistoriqueacadien.com. Summer admission C$16 adults, C$14 seniors, C$11-C$13 children 6 and over, C$37 families; late Sept rates discounted about 60%. Early June to mid-Sept daily 10am–6pm; mid-Sept to late Sept 10am–5pm. Closed late Sept to early June.

Where to Stay

Hôtel Paulin ★★ A three-story red clapboard building with a green-shingled mansard roof, the Hotel Paulin was built in 1891 as the first hotel in Caraquet and is still best in town; it has been operated by a member of the Paulin family for the past three generations. Located just off the main boulevard and overlooking the bay, it's an attractively Victorian place that's gone just a bit more upscale with the times over the past decade—adding units and raising prices to match. The lobby's decor features royal blue wainscoting, canary-yellow walls, and stuffed furniture upholstered in white with blue piping. Rooms and suites are comfortably if sparely furnished in flowery duvets and still more antiques. (Four newish luxury suites on the top floor are more stylish and contemporary, adding luxe touches like granite and mahogany styling; the Albert Suite has a lovely, modern bath.) However, not all units here have a true ocean view; ask when booking. The hotel's first floor houses a handsome, well-regarded **restaurant ★★** featuring seafood and fusion and French influences (think grilled pizzas, tricked-up lobster, seafood grills, and pears with goat cheese). Spa services are also being added.

143 Blvd. St-Pierre Ouest, Caraquet, NB E1W 1B6. ✆ **866/727-9981** or 506/727-9981. Fax 506/727-4808. www.hotelpaulin.com. 16 units. Mid-June to mid-Sept C$195–C$315 double and suite; mid-Sept to mid-June C$179–C$235 double and suite. Minimum 2-night stay first 2 wks of Aug. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; massage; spa. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, no phone.

Where to Dine

Caraquet is a good place for seafood, naturally. The **Hôtel Paulin's restaurant ★★** is best in town for its charm, but there are several inexpensive-to-moderate spots along the main drag that also serve fresh seafood as well.

For a delicious and sophisticated picnic snack, head to **Les Blancs d'Arcadie ★**, 488 Blvd. St-Pierre Est (✆ **506/727-5952**) just east of town. The specialties here are artisanals cheeses made from the milk of local cows; they include variations made with smoke, salt, pesto, French herbs, sun-dried tomato, and barbecue flavoring.

GRANDE-ANSE

Grande-Anse is a wide-spot-in-the-road village of low, modern homes near bluffs overlooking the bay, lorded over by the stone Saint Jude church. The best view of the village—and a pretty good spot for a picnic—is along the bluffs just below the church. (Look for the sign indicating QUAI 45m/147 ft. west of the church.) Here you'll find a small man-made harbor with a fleet of fishing boats, a small sandy beach, and some grassy bluffs where you can park overlooking the bay.

If you'd prefer picnic tables, head a few miles westward to **Pokeshaw Park,** open from mid-June through August. Just offshore is a large kettle-shaped island ringed with cliffs that rise from the waves, long ago separated from the cliffs on which you're now standing. An active cormorant rookery thrives among the trees. There's a small picnic shelter for use in inclement weather; the park's open daily from 9am to 9pm, and a small admission fee is charged.

For an ocean swimming experience, head to **Plage Grande-Anse,** located 2km (a mile) east of the town. This handsome beach has a snack bar near the parking area and is open from 10am to 9pm daily. There's a small entrance fee for adults.

A SIDE TRIP TO SHIPPAGAN ★ & MISCOU ISLAND ★★

Both Shippagan and Miscou Island require detours off Route 11, but they're each worth the detour if you're interested in glimpsing Acadian New Brunswick in the slow lane—tourism

has not yet discovered this place. As an added bonus, Miscou Island boasts some fine beaches and a historic lighthouse. I think this side trip is worth a half-day to a day, because the area looks more like Cape Cod or Maine than much of the rest of New Brunswick. There aren't, however, places to stay and dine; you'll need to do that in Caraquet.

Shippagan ★, the first stop, lies about 30 minutes from Caraquet via routes 11 and 345. It's a quiet, leafy village that's also home to sizable crab and herring fleets. (Go down to the harbor and snap pictures of the various boats in their slips; it's better than buying a postcard.)

There's a famous local legend about this harbor: Three identical herring boats were built for it in Saint John in 1966, but two sank within several years of their maiden voyages for no apparent reason, killing nine fishermen; one ship's wreck has still never been found. The third ship, the *Marc Guylaine,* then became the object of intense scrutiny in these parts. Local fisherfolk assembled in angry public meetings until the "cursed" third ship was finally sold for scrap to the government—except that it wasn't scrapped. The provincial government shrewdly resold it to some other folks, who used it for fishing and ocean research on the west coast. Today it still plies the fishing waters of British Columbia.

Shippagan is also home to the surprisingly modern **New Brunswick Aquarium and Marine Centre** ★★, 100 Aquarium St. (✆ **506/336-3013**), also on the water near the harbor—prominently posted signs around town direct you there—a good destination if you're the least bit curious about local marine life. Here you'll learn about the 125 species of native fish hereabouts, many of which are on display. Kids are especially drawn to the **harbor seal tank** outside, where trainers prompt the sleek beasts to show off their acrobatic skills. Little ones will also love watching the twice-daily feedings, when the seals down pounds of herring. Admission is C$8 adults, C$6 seniors, C$5 children age 6 to 18, and C$20 families. The center is open mid-May to late September from 10am to 6pm daily; seal feedings are at 11am and 4pm.

Keep driving north on Route 113 and you'll soon cross a low drawbridge onto **Laméque Island** ★★. If you're traveling through in mid-July, don't be surprised to hear fine baroque music wafting from the **Sainte-Cecile Church.** Since 1975, the island has hosted the **Laméque International Baroque Music Festival;** call ✆ **800/320-2276** or 506/344-5846 for details. For about 10 days each summer, talented musicians perform an ambitious series of concerts, held in an architecturally striking, acoustically wonderful church in a small village on the island's north coast. Tickets often sell out well in advance, and most are priced at C$20 to C$35 per adult.

The **Saint-Marie church** ★★, a gorgeous twin-towered white wooden structure, is also worth finding; it's located in the hamlet of **Saint-Raphael-sur-Mer,** about 16km (10 miles) from Shippagan—bear right onto Route 305 a few miles after crossing the drawbridge onto Laméque Island. (Saint-Raphael is also the village where those angry fishermen finally demanded the cursed fishing boat's sale.) From the church, continue north on 305 another couple of kilometers (a mile or two) to find **Cap-Bateau Arch** ★★, a remarkable natural stone formation that looks like it should be somewhere in the canyons of Utah.

Backtrack to Route 113 and keep traveling north. You'll soon cross onto **Miscou Island** ★★, which for decades was connected by a simple ferry. In the mid-1990s, an arched bridge was finally erected across the strait. The bridge made a few islanders grumpy, but happily this wee island still retains a sense of remoteness, especially north of the village of Miscou Centre when you start getting into boggy territory.

If you drive northward on Route 113 across the island until you run out of road (it won't take long), you'll come to New Brunswick's oldest lighthouse. The **Miscou Island Lighthouse** ★ (✆ **506/336-1302**), built in 1856, marks the confluence of the Gulf of St. Lawrence and the Baie des Chaleurs. It's only open to the public in August and September, from dawn until dusk.

The dominant natural feature of Miscou, though, might be its **bog** ★. The bog landscape here is as distinctive as that of the Canadian Rockies; it's flat and green, and stretches for miles in places. You'll see much of this bog habitat on northern Miscou Island, where some of the bogs have been harvested for their peat. There's a well-constructed **nature trail** on Route 113, just north of Miscou Centre; a boardwalk loops through the bog and around an open pond. Learn about the orchids and lilies that thrive in the vast and spongy mat of shrubs and roots, and watch for the pitcher plants. The loop takes about 20 minutes, and it's free. If you come in fall (say, late September through mid-October), you'll find these bogs suddenly aflame in coats of gorgeous crimson. It happens every year

There's also a saltwater **beach** (✆ **506/336-1302**) on Miscou Island's northern end where you can swim, change, and shower; it's open year-round.

Where to Stay

Miscou Camping & Cabins It's only open 2 months a year, and it's dirt simple, but it's the only option. Far north on Miscou Island lie these unpretentious cottages, trailers, and tenting sites, some right on the beach facing the dunes and the ocean. Small decks front each cottage. The place has an English caravan-park feel, with a few camp trailers—you can also rent those by the night—in a field behind the cottages. Facilities? Group bathrooms and a rudimentary volleyball court. That's it. Most folks spend their time beachcombing or sunning on the long strand of beach. Note that cottage rentals here are now only by the week (but ask about cancellations and open dates anyway). Campsites are also available, for C$20 to C$22 each. Beware of the voracious local mosquitoes, which descend at dusk.

10554 Rte. 113, Miscou, NB E8T 2A2. ✆ **506/344-1881**. www.campingmiscou.com. 6 units, 100 campsites. Cottages C$670 weekly. MC, V. Closed Sept–July 5. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* Kitchenette, no phone.

11 MOUNT CARLETON PROVINCIAL PARK ★

In 1969, the province of New Brunswick carved out some of its choicest woodlands and set them aside as a wilderness park—a wise decision. Today Mount Carleton Provincial Park consists of 2,800 hectares (7,000 acres) of lakes, streams, thick boreal forest, and gently rounded mountains, the tallest of which afford excellent views of the surrounding countryside. The park's also home to moose, black bear, coyotes, bobcat, and more than 100 species of birds. It's so pristine that fishing isn't allowed. If you're anywhere in the area and crave a truly wild experience, it's well worth a visit—though you have to *want* to get there.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE The park's access road and entrance is on Route 180, about 40km (25 miles) east of Saint-Quentin, the nearest community for supplies; there are no convenient general stores anywhere near the park's gates, so stock up. The park is also accessible from

Bathurst to the east, but that's a rugged, 112km (70-mile) drive on a road that's gravel in spots, has no services, and is buzzed regularly by logging trucks. Use the other route.

VISITOR INFORMATION It costs C$7 per car (cash only) to enter, and the park's gates are open daily from mid-May through mid-October (7am–10pm in summer and 8am–8pm in spring and fall). A small **interpretive center** (✆ **506/235-0793**), located at the entrance gate, offers background on the park's natural and cultural history. The park remains open, though unstaffed, the rest of the year.

CAMPING

Armstrong Brook ★★ is the principal destination for visiting campers coming to Mount Carleton. It has 88 sites split between a forest near Lake Nictau's shore and an open, grassy field; campers can also avail themselves of hot showers and a bathhouse for washing up. A path leads to lake's edge, where there's a spit of small, flat pebbles good for swimming and sunbathing. Camping fees are C$11 per site on weekdays, C$14 on the weekend.

Four backcountry sites are located high on the slopes of Mount Carleton (preregistration required). These sites, which require a 4km (2½-mile) hike, offer views into a rugged valley and a great sense of remoteness. Water is available but should be treated (beavers live nearby). No fires are permitted, so bring a stove. The fee up here is C$5 per night. Two other remote campsites on the shores of Lake Nictau are accessible either by canoe or a moderate walk. Register in advance for these, as well; the fee is C$8 to C$9 per night.

Note that all water supplies and toilets are shut off after September 15 due to concerns about pipes freezing.

HIKING & BIKING

The park has 11 hiking trails totaling nearly 64km (40 miles). The helpful park staff at the gatehouse will be happy to direct you to a hike that suits your experience and mood. (There's even one wheelchair-accessible trail.)

The park's premier hike, of course, is to the summit of **Mount Carleton** ★★, the province's highest point at 820m (2,690 ft.). Although that doesn't *sound* impressive, it's all relative: Views from the peak to the tablelands below seem endless. A craggy comb of rocks with a 360-degree view of the lower mountains and the sprawling lakes marks the summit. The trailhead is about a 25-minute drive from the gatehouse; allow about 4 hours for a round-trip hike of about 10km (6 miles).

Overlooking Nictau Lake is **Mount Sagamook,** at an altitude of about 762m (2,500 ft.). It's a steep and demanding hike of about 3km (2 miles) to the summit, where you're rewarded with spectacular views of the northern park.

For the truly gung-ho, there's the ridge walk that connects Sagamook and Carleton via **Mount Head.** The views from high above are unforgettable; but you'll need to set up a shuttle system (with a friend and two cars) to do the entire ridge in 1 day.

If you have a **mountain bike,** bring it. The park's gravel roads here are perfect for exploring, and non-park vehicles are banned from several of these roads, which take you deep into the woods past clear lakes and rushing streams.

Finally, in winter the park becomes part of a regional **snowmobile** trail system and also offers an 8km (5-mile) **cross-country ski trail** through the woods.

Auberge Evasion de Rêves ★ Kids If the weather's bad, or you're just not into camping in the park with the kiddies, check out this property in nearby Saint-Quentin. Its name roughly translates as "Dream-Escape Inn," though that might be a bit generous. Inside, it's made up of simply furnished business-hotel-type rooms of the Courtyard This or Homewood That ilk, but with small flourishes of design on various themes (nature, golf, and so forth). The unpretentiousness is actually refreshing, and kids enjoy the indoor swimming pool. Rooms have TVs, DVD players, and high-speed Internet access; some have extras like settees, mini-fridges, armoires, and the like. There's also a dining area, a lounge, and a nice high-ceilinged common area that feels like a lodge. There are a few single rooms here, and a few specially equipped for special-abled travelers, as well.

11 Canada St., Saint- Quentin, NB E8A 1J2. ✆ **866/443-7383** or 506/235-3551. w ww.aubergeevasion.com. 14 units. C$97–C$133 double. Rates include continental breakfast. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Jacuzzi; indoor pool. *In room:* A/C, TV, DVD (some units), fridge (some units), hair dryer.

7 Prince Edward Island

Prince Edwar d Island (PEI) ma y not be the world's most exciting vacation spot, but it's a place that has always inspired travelers I know to do exactly the one thing they came here to do: *relax*.

There's something about this richly hued landscape of blue seas, henna-colored cliffs capped with purple flowers, and green, green fields that triggers a pleasant disconnection with the hurry-scurry, Twitter-it-now pace of modern life. Indeed, even *change* is slow here: Over the past 120 years the island's population has grown by just 30,000.

Beyond its restorative qualities, the landscape here is remarkable for its gentleness. It's sometimes difficult to believe pastoral PEI and boggy, blustery Newfoundland even share the same planet, never mind the same gulf. The island's northern coast is lined with red-sand beaches washed by warm waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The swimming here is far warmer than that in Maine or New Hampshire. You'll also find low, rolling hills in the interior blanketed in trees or crops (especially potatoes, for which the island is justly famous). Small farms make up the island's backbone: One-quarter of the place is still dedicated to agriculture, more than 2,000 individual farms in all. As David Byrne might say: Same as it ever was.

PEI was first sighted and explored in 1534 by the tireless French explorer Jacques Cartier, who discovered Mi'kmaq native Canadians living here. Over the next 2 centuries, dominion over the island bounced between Great Britain and France (who called the place Isle-St-Jean). Great Britain was awarded the island in 1763 as part of the Treaty of Paris that was hashed out to settle the Revolutionary War; a little more than a century later, the first Canadian Confederation was held in Charlottetown and resulted in the official creation of Canada in 1867. (To be fair, though, PEI didn't actually join this new confederation until 1873; a careful lot, these folks.)

The island is British and civil through and through, which means people are friendly. It's also very small, yet there are numerous side roads—roads that are usually (but not always) well marked. In any case, it's difficult to become disoriented here. Still, you should try. Whether you're on a bike or in a car, it can be quite pleasurable getting lost on the back roads, secure in the knowledge that you'll eventually end up either at the junction of another road—or at the sea.

There's one more thing you should know. For all its stuttery steps toward modernity, this island is still largely steeped in the slower pace of an earlier era. Milkmen still make their rounds; you return soda bottles for refilling, not recycling; and gas-station attendants cheerfully pump your gas and wash your windows without your ever needing to ask. Take a cue from this slow cadence and schedule 1 or 2 extra days into your vacation, with absolutely no plans, in a cabin or cottage. Even if it rains, you probably won't regret it.

This chapter is divided into the counties that trisect PEI. They're easy to remember: They rise, in order of royal hierarchy (Prince to Queens to Kings), in the direction of England.

1 EXPLORING PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

PEI is, by far, Canada's smallest province—it's only about 193km (120 miles) long from tip to tip, which is amazing—and that keeps your transit down to a minimum. With one or two smart bases, you can easily explore the whole thing in a week. However, traffic on island roads—slowed by farm tractors, shutterbugs, cows, the elderly, leisurely drivers, terrain, and odd twists and turns along the route—tends to be quite a bit slower than you'd expect. So don't count on the sort of speedy travel you can enjoy on a fast Nova Scotia two-lane. Just kick back and enjoy the scenery; you'll get there. Eventually.

In recent years, a number of PEI hotels and attractions have banded together to market a ton of different vacation packages that offer discounts ranging from moderate to generous. There are some good values hidden in there. Call the provincial tourism office at ✆ **800/463-4734** or 902/368-4444 to discuss or receive information about these island packages.

ESSENTIALS

VISITOR INFORMATION Tourism PEI publishes a comprehensive **free visitor's guide** to island attractions and lodgings that's well worth picking up. It is available at all information centers on the island, or in advance by calling ✆ **800/463-4734** or 902/368-4444. The official PEI website is located at **www.gentleisland.com**.

PEI's splashy main information center is in something called **Gateway Village** (✆ **902/437-8570**), just as you arrive on the island via the Confederation Bridge (see below). It's a good spot for gathering brochures and asking last-minute questions. There's also a well-laid-out interpretive center featuring exhibits on island history and culture.

Who Is This Prince Edward Guy, Anyway?

Prince Edward Island is named for Prince Edward Augustus (1767–1820), who was the son of King George III of England. A strict disciplinarian, Augustus rose swiftly through the British military ranks and was posted to Halifax in 1791 with the elite Fusiliers unit; his rise continued, until he was promoted to the position of official commander in chief of all British forces in North America in 1799—a post he seems to have held for only 1 year. After returning to England, his career languished, and his retirement as a duke to a Devonshire cottage might have been his ultimate undoing: After a walk in the cool mists, he caught a cold or pneumonia and expired at the age of just 52.

However, Edward's one true lasting claim to fame occurred when he married very late in life and his wife bore him a daughter (she was less than 1 year old when he died). And because neither Edward's father nor his uncle had any surviving grandchildren—by legitimate wives, anyway—Edward's daughter became, by default, the Queen of England. (Grab an encyclopedia if you want to understand the convoluted rules of British succession.) In 1837, the girl acceded to the throne, where she would preside over one of the most impressive expansions of empire in world history.

We remember her today as Queen Victoria: the face that launched an era (and an architectural style).

The Gateway—which also features a number of retail shops selling island products—is a little odd, however. Its own promoters say the Village portrays a "turn-of-the-century PEI streetscape encompassing an exposition pavilion, food and retail services, liquor store, visitor information center, and the Festivals at Gateway." (Huh?)

Yes, you can stop here for brochures and maps, grab a snack and a break, and take a quick walk through the interpretive center. But push onward—this island's got a lot to offer. Why spend any more time than you need to at a tourist kiosk?

WHEN TO GO PEI's peak tourism season is brief, running 6 or 7 weeks from **early July through late August.** Many attractions don't fully open until July, and a few close up shop before August is even done.

Tourism officials and entrepreneurs are trying to convince shops and attractions to maintain longer seasons and opening hours (especially during the shoulder seasons), but they still have a ways to go. If you plan to visit in June or September (and those can be lovely times to come), expect to be disappointed by some restaurants and attractions being closed. My advice? Check the listings in this book carefully for restaurant, hotel, and attraction opening seasons. And definitely think about basing yourself in Charlottetown for awhile if you'll be making a shoulder-season visit—the capital city's restaurants mostly keep year-round hours (thanks to the presence of legislators).

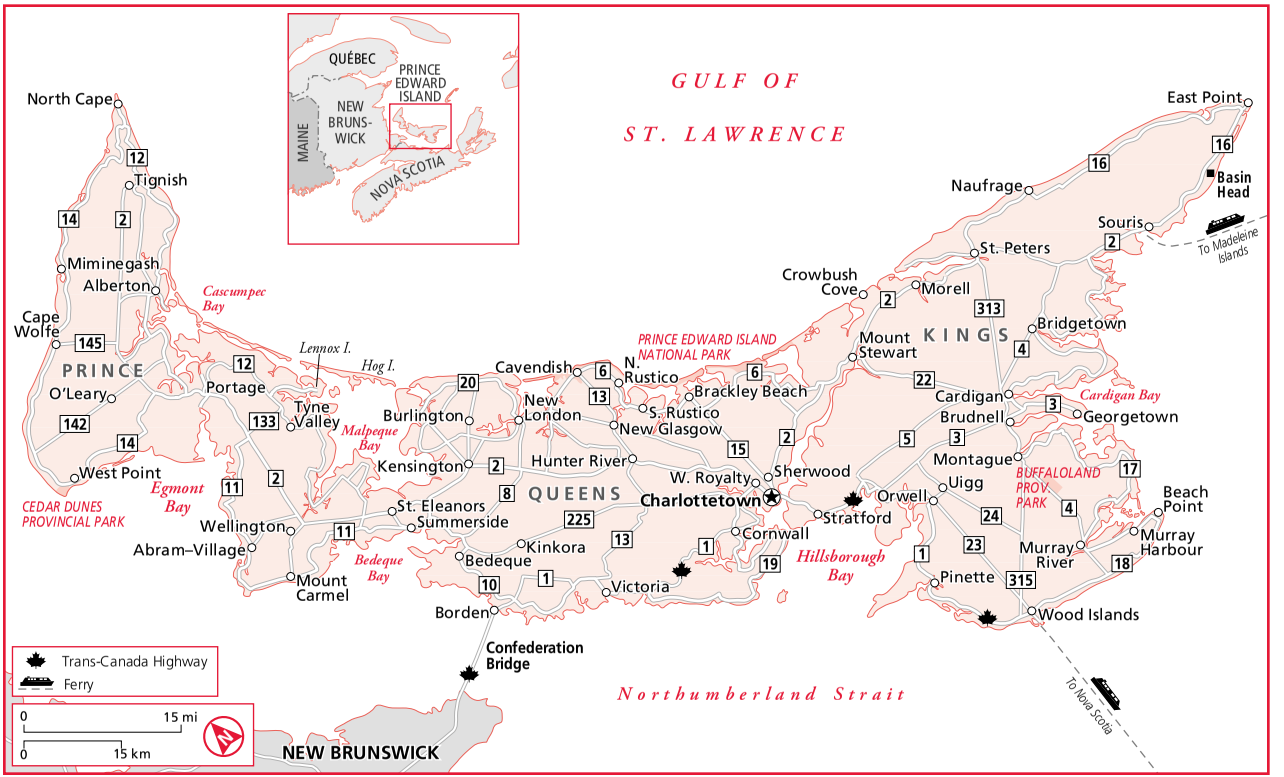
GETTING THERE If you're coming by car, as the vast majority do, you'll either arrive by ferry (see below) or drive onto the island via the big **Confederation Bridge** (✆ **888/437-6565** or 902/437-7300), which opened with great fanfare in 1997. (On the island, you'll also sometimes hear this bridge referred to as the "fixed link," a reference to the guarantee Canada made back in 1873 to provide a permanent link from the mainland. These people have long memories!) Whatever you call it, though, the dramatic 13km (8-mile) bridge is open 24 hours a day and takes 10 to 12 minutes to cross. Unless you're high up in a van, a truck, or an RV, however, your views are mostly obstructed by the concrete barriers that form the guardrails along both sides.

The round-trip bridge toll as of 2009 was C$43 round-trip for passenger cars (more for vehicles with more than two axles); the toll is collected when you leave the island, not when you enter it. (If you drive on in a rental car and fly off, you escape the toll altogether.) Credit cards are accepted at the bridge plaza.

Cyclists and backpackers can also cross the bridge, but not on the road; instead, they must use the bridge's shuttle van, which charges C$4 per pedestrian or C$8 per cyclist with a cycle.

Even if you didn't bring wheels to Canada or rent any after arriving there, you can get here via several long-distance van services. **PEI Express Shuttle** (✆ **877/877-1771;** www.peishuttle.com), one of them, runs one van daily each way between Halifax, Halifax's airport, and Charlottetown. The ride takes about 5 hours from downtown Halifax (about 4 hr. from the airport) and costs C$60 one-way for adults, C$55 for students and seniors, C$45 for children under age 12. (There's an additional C$5 surcharge if you're picked up at or dropped off from Halifax airport, and a C$5 fuel surcharge during certain high-gas-price times.)

By Ferry For those arriving from Cape Breton Island or other points east, **Northumberland Ferries Limited** (✆ **888/249-7245;** www.nfl-bay.com) provides seasonal service between Caribou, Nova Scotia (just north of Pictou) and Woods Island, PEI. Ferries with a 250-car capacity run from May to mid-December. During peak season (June to mid-Oct), ferries depart each port approximately every 90 minutes throughout the day,


GULF OF
ST. LAWRENCE
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Alberton
Cape Wolfe
PRINCE
O'Leary
West Point
CEDAR DUNES PROVINCIAL PARK
Egmont Bay
Cascumpec Bay
Lennox I.
Hog I.
Portage
Tyne Valley
Malpeque Bay
Wellington
Abram–Village
Mount Carmel
Bedeque Bay
Burlington
Kensington
St. Eleanors
Summerside
Bedeque
Kinkora
Borden
Confederation Bridge
NEW BRUNSWICK
Cavendish
New London
Hunter River
QUEENS
Charlottetown
Victoria
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND NATIONAL PARK
N. Rustico
S. Rustico
New Glasgow
Brackley Beach
W. Royalty
Sherwood
Cornwall
Stratford
Hillsborough Bay
East Point
Naufrage
Basin Head
Souris
To Madeleine Islands
St. Peters
Crowbush Cove
Morell
Mount Stewart
KINGS
Bridgetown
Cardigan
Brudnell
Cardigan Bay
Georgetown
Montague
Uigg
Orwell
BUFFALOLAND PROV. PARK
Beach Point
Murray Harbour
Murray River
Pinette
Wood Islands
To Nova Scotia
Northumberland Strait
Trans-Canada Highway
Ferry
0 15 mi
0 15 km

with the last ferry departing as late as 8pm or 9:30pm in mid-summer depending on which direction you are traveling. The crossing takes about 75 minutes.

No reservations are accepted, except for buses; thus, it's best to arrive at least an hour before departure to boost your odds of securing a berth on the next boat. Early-morning ferries tend to be less crowded. Fares are C$63 for a regular-size car (more for campers and RVs), plus C$16 per person (C$14 for seniors, free for kids under age 12). There's a small fuel surcharge, as well, and major credit cards are honored.

Note that this round-trip fare is only collected going off the island. If you take the ferry onto the island and drive off, you pay the cheaper bridge toll only; drive on and take the ferry off, and you pay the higher ferry toll only.

By Air The island's main airport, Charlottetown Airport (call sign YYG; www.flypei.com), is a few miles north of the city. In summer, you can get here easily from either the U.S. or Canada.

Air Canada (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) commuter flights from Halifax take just a half-hour, and the airline also flies daily to Toronto and Montréal. Calgary-based **WestJet** (✆ **888/937-8538;** www.westjet.com) also connects Charlottetown with Toronto.

Delta (✆ **800/221-1212;** www.delta.com) runs direct weekend summertime service from Boston's Logan and New York's JFK airports. **Northwest** (✆ **800/447-4747;** www.nwa.com) predated Delta, and has flown to the island from Detroit in summer for several years.

A taxi ride into Charlottetown from the airport costs a flat fee of C$12 for the first passenger, plus C$3 each for additional passengers; two strangers can even share a single cab into town for a city-mandated fare of C$9 each. (Cabs also run to other parts of the island, for higher flat fares.) There are also limousine firms and several chain auto-rental outfits in the terminal.

2 THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Prince Edward Island doesn't have any wilderness, nor even much wildness, to speak of. It's all about cultivated landscapes that have long ago been tamed by farmers. That doesn't mean you can't find a few outdoor adventures, though. Here are some places to start.

BICYCLING There's no finer destination in Atlantic Canada for relaxed cycling than Prince Edward Island. The modest size of this island, the gentleness of the hills (the island's highest point is just 142m/466 ft. above sea level), and the loveliness of the landscapes all make for memorable biking trips. Although you won't find much (or any) rugged mountain biking here, you can find plenty of idyllic excursions, especially in the northern and eastern portions of the island. Just be sure to avoid the Trans-Canada Highway on the south coast, and busy main roads like Route 2, and you'll find superb backroads biking throughout the network of secondary routes.

There's also a very significant off-road bike trail here: the **Confederation Trail** ★★★, an impressive system of several hundred miles of pathway built along the ripped-up trackbed of an ill-fated provincial railway that could serve as a model for any state in the U.S. The main trail runs from Tignish (on the island's far northwestern shore) to Elmira (up in the northeastern corner), while good branch trails stretch right into downtown Charlottetown and touch on a number of villages mentioned in this book, such as Souris,

Montague, and Georgetown. One spur even reaches all the way to the Confederation Bridge (see above).

The pathway is mostly covered in rolled stone dust, which makes for good traveling with either a mountain bike or hybrid. Services are slowly developing along this route, with more rental services and inns cropping up every year. Ask at tourist bureaus for updated information.

One excellent place to base for exploring the trail is the **Trailside Inn Café & Adventures** (p. 259) in Mount Stewart, where several spurs of the trail converge; it was a pioneer establishment when this trail system was still yet young. The cafe can even arrange for return shuttles if you'd prefer a one-way cycling tour.

The experts at **MacQueen's Island Tours & Bike Shop,** 430 Queen St. in Charlottetown (✆ **800/969-2822** or 902/368-2453; www.macqueens.com), also organize a range of bicycle tour packages with all-inclusive prices covering bike rentals, accommodations, route cards, maps, luggage transfers, and emergency road repair service. They also run shuttle vans out to the Trail. A customized 5- to 7-night tour of a section of the island for two might run C$1,000 to C$1,360 per person, double occupancy; a custom group tour would be cheaper per person. Bikes can be rented at the shop for C$25 per day and C$125 per week (kids' bikes are cheaper, touring bikes a bit more expensive). And, of course, they do all repairs.

Another pure cycle shop in Charlottetown doing rentals, repairs, bike tune-ups, and shuttle runs out to either end of the trail (no tours) is **Smooth Cycle,** at 330 University Ave. (✆ **800/310-6550** from eastern Canada or 902/566-5530). Rentals here including helmet, water bottle, and a lock cost C$17 per half-day, C$25 per day, or C$110 per week. Note that the shop is closed Sundays.

FISHING If you're interested in deep-sea fishing, head to the north coast, where you'll find plenty of fishing captains and outfitters happy to take you out on the big waves. The greatest concentrations of services are at the harbors of North Rustico and Covehead Bay; see the "Queens County" section, below, for more details on specific outfits. Rates are quite reasonable, generally about C$20 for 3 hours or so.

Trout fishing holes on the island attract inland anglers, although, as always, the very best spots are a matter of local knowledge. A good place to start your inquiries is at **Going Fishing** in the Sherwood Shopping Centre at 161 St. Peters Rd. in Charlottetown (✆ **902/367-3444**). The store specializes in fly-fishing equipment, but also stocks conventional rods and reels as well. They've newly expanded their showroom.

Information on required fishing licenses can be obtained from any visitor information center, or by contacting the province's **Department of Fisheries, Aquaculture & Rural Development,** P.O. Box 2000, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N8 (✆ **902/368-6330**).

GOLF While it can never possess the scenic grandeur of Nova Scotia's top courses, PEI's reputation for golf has soared in recent years thanks largely to a slew of new, renovated, and expanded courses—and the LPGA success of Charlottetown native Lorie Kane. (The island now possesses ten of Canada's top 100 courses, according to the Toronto *Globe & Mail*.) You can golf beside the ocean in a setting similar to that of Cape Cod (a red Cape Cod, but still).

One of the best-regarded courses on the island is the **Links at Crowbush Cove** ★ (✆ **800/235-8909** or 902/368-5761). Sand dunes and persistent winds off the gulf add to the challenge at this relatively young course, which is on the northeastern coast; greens fees run C$79 to C$99 per person.

Another perennial favorite is the **Brudenell River Golf Course** (✆ **800/235-8909** or 902/652-8965), near Montague along the eastern shore at the Rodd Brudenell River Resort; in the late 1990s the course added a second 18-holer, designed by Michael Hurdzan, and a double-ended driving range. Greens fees are C$59 to C$79 per person.

Golf PEI (✆ **866/465-3734**), a trade association, publishes a booklet and website outlining the essentials of 21 member island courses. Request a copy from island information centers or from the provincial tourist information office, or check the website at **www.golfpei.com**; the organization's mailing address is 565 N. River Rd., Charlottetown, PEI C1E 1J7.

SEA KAYAKING Little PEI packs in more than 1,200km (800 miles) of attractive coastline, most of it touched by relatively warm seawater, making for some excellent sea kayaking.

Paddlers can vary the scene from broad tidal inlets ringed with marsh to rusty-red coastline topped with swaying waves of marram grass. **Outside Expeditions** (✆ **800/207-3899** or 902/963-3366; www.getoutside.com) in North Rustico hosts half- and full-day excursions and clinics daily at the national park and nearby (including one that takes in a drop-in to the PEI Preserve Co.). Rates vary, but you can usually figure on C$50 to C$100 per person. More ambitious paddlers can sign up for 1- to 7-day kayak trips departing throughout the summer. Excursions are also available from Brudenell River Provincial Park in eastern PEI, a more sheltered environment with calmer waters than the north shore. They'll also rent you a kayak if you want to plan your own itinerary.

SWIMMING PEI's chief attraction is its red sand beaches, which are generally excellent for swimming. You'll find them ringing the island, tucked in between dunes and crumbling cliffs. Thanks to the moderating influence of the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the water temperature is more humane here than elsewhere in Atlantic Canada. The most popular beaches (by far) are at **Prince Edward Island National Park** along the north coast, but you can easily find other local or provincial beaches with great swimming by asking anywhere locally.

Good choices include **Cedar Dunes Provincial Park** (on the island's southwestern coast), **Red Point Provincial Park** (on its northeastern shore), and **Panmure Island Provincial Park** on the southeastern coast.

3 QUEENS COUNTY

Queens County occupies the center of PEI. It's home to the island's largest city (**Charlottetown**), which is also the provincial capital, and hosts the greatest concentration of traveler services by far.

The county is neatly cleaved by the Hillsborough River, which is spanned by a bridge at Charlottetown. **Cavendish** on the north shore is the most tourist-oriented place in the entire province; if the words "Ripley's Believe It or Not Museum" or "amusement park" bring up positive images for you, you might consider avoiding this area, which has built a vigorous tourist industry around one fictional literary character (Anne of Green Gables) who fictionally lived here in a fictional time but is now bringing in very real touro-dollars.

On the other hand, much of the rest of the county—besides Charlottetown, of course—is extremely pastoral and untrammeled.

Two areas of Queens County merit their own sections within this chapter: Charlottetown on the south shore, of course, and **Prince Edward Island National Park** on the

north shore. Flip ahead to those sections if you're just seeking detailed information on those destinations in a hurry.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Route 2 is the fastest way to travel east or west through the county, though it really lacks the charm of the quieter byways. Route 6 is the main route along the county's northern coast; unlike Route 2, following this highway is not a straight line but rather involves a number of turns at stop signs at intersections. Keep a sharp eye on the road signs or you'll lose the trail.

VISITOR INFORMATION The snazzy, well-stocked little **Cavendish Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **800/463-4734** or 902/963-7830) is open daily from mid-June through mid-October. It's located just north of the intersection of routes 13 and 6.

CAVENDISH ★

Cavendish is the home of the fictional red-headed Anne of Green Gables, a somewhat heroic figure in Canadian children's literature (and, in fact, Anne is well known around the world, though most Americans probably have never heard of her). She's a simple but plucky girl who perseveres through the sheer force of her optimism. And her fictional hometown is—make that was—a nice enough area, featuring a bucolic mix of woodlands, fields, rolling hills, and sandy dunes, the ideal setting for the pastoral novels that made Anne so famous.

However, the enduring popularity of the novels has attracted droves of curious tourists over the years, and it didn't take savvy entrepreneurs long at all to figure out that this place could support a mini-Disney's worth of children's attractions, hotels, and eateries. The bucolic character of Anne's town has thus been severely compromised. There are wax museums and amusement parks here, all of which would probably alarm or embarrass Anne, plus a surfeit of motels and "cottage courts" (a peculiarly local form of lodging). This development doesn't approach the garishness of, say, Niagara Falls, but it's still pretty much unavoidable if you're passing through, especially along the main road (Route 6) west of Route 13.

The nicest thing I can say about Cavendish is that most of its attractions are set back from the road, and spread out well apart from each other. They don't harmonize with the landscape, but the collateral damage has been less than it could have been. And it's somewhat limited—you only need head east or west of town on Route 6 for a few miles to get back to the lovely rolling fields that made this region famous in the first place.

As for "downtown" Cavendish, such as it is, there's truly "no *there* there" (as Gertrude Stein would say). There's no discernible village center, just an intersection of roads and a tourist information center; everything is sprawled out along all the approach roads. One amusement park, Avonlea (see "Everything Anne," below), is developing its property and trying to create a sort of village center, but it's just not the same as the genuine, old-fashioned article. Remember—this had always been a farming area; it was never a big market town, with a bustling main street; and it never will be.

My advice? If you're on PEI to stroll quaint lanes and villages, and couldn't give a whit about Anne, you're probably much better off blowing right through town (or finding a back-roads way around it) and heading north to North or South Rustico instead. There's plenty to do in the vicinity that feels a lot more relaxing and authentic.

If your kids do enjoy amusements, though—or you do know who Anne is—buckle in for a day or two. This is as touristy a ride as the Maritimes can muster.

Visitors to Prince Edward Island owe it to themselves to at least think about picking up a copy of *Anne of Green Gables* at some point. If you don't read it, you might feel a bit left out of the fun—and unable to digest the inside references that pepper aspects of local culture in these parts. (Gas stations in Cavendish even sell little Anne dolls—which would be more than mildly disturbing anywhere else.) In fact, Anne has become so omnipresent and popular on the island that a licensing authority was created in the 1990s to control the crush of Anne-related products popping up everywhere.

In case you don't have time to read it, here's a little background. In 1908, island native Lucy Maud Montgomery published *Anne of Green Gables,* her very first book—and an instant smash. The book is a fictional account of Anne Shirley, a precocious 11-year-old who's mistakenly sent from Nova Scotia to the farm of dour islanders Matthew and Marilla Cuthbert. (The plot device driving this conflict? The Cuthberts had requested an orphan *boy* to help with their farm chores.)

Anne's vivid imagination and outsized vocabulary get her into a series of increasingly more hilarious pickles, from which she generally emerges beloved by everyone who encounters her. It's a bright, somewhat bittersweet story that touched a serious nerve and became such a hit worldwide that it spawned a number of sequels. (The book is still taught in many elementary schools in Japan—I'm guessing it's Anne's always-plucky attitude in the face of crushing real-life circumstances that attracts her to the Japanese.) Whatever the reason, throngs of female Japanese tourists congregate in Cavendish each year to relive Anne's fictional life for a few days; you're certain to walk through the fields of their clicking cameras at some point.

As corny as all the accumulated attractions are now, though, there is a certain sweetness to both Anne's story and the landscape in which she lived. Except for the tourist tack, this area still looks more or less the same as it did during the era when Montgomery wrote Anne onto the page. If you can overlook the fact that Cavendish itself has basically been eaten alive by its fame, and you have a fondness for things English (or persistent characters in children's books), you might enjoy it here.

If you're a traveler who has never heard of Anne until this moment, and you're more interested in locating fine foods and scenic bike tours than the house where Anne "grew up," skip the town.

Anne of Green Gables Museum at Silver Bush ★ About 19km (12 miles) west of Cavendish, near the intersection of routes 6 and 20, is Silver Bush, also known as the Anne of Green Gables Museum (though it's not the "official" government-sanctioned Anne attraction). While technically unrelated to Anne herself, this simple two-story home of white clapboard probably *did* sow some seeds of influence for the story: Lucy Maud Montgomery's aunt and uncle lived here, the authoress passed many days in childhood in this house visiting family, and she even married here in 1911. (In a letter to a cousin, she once revealed that "I love this old home more than any place on Earth.") The surrounding countryside is lovely and untouched by time, and the building still holds some of Montgomery's furniture, linens, photos, and other personal effects. For the best view of the lake that may have inspired the "Lake of Shining Waters," take the horse-drawn carriage ride. It's hardly essential, but an hour's visit would be in order if you're ticking off Lucy or Anne destinations.

Rte. 20, Park Corner (about 6 miles north of intersection with Rte. 6). ✆ **800/665-2663** or 902/886-2884 (weekends only). Admission C$3 adults, C$1 children age 6–16. May and Oct daily 11am–4pm; June and Sept daily 10am–4pm; July–Aug daily 9am–5pm.

Anne of Green Gables—The Musical This sprightly, professional musical rendition of Anne's story (complete with 19-piece orchestra) has been playing every summer for years in Charlottetown's downtown arts center—*45* years, in fact, a Cal Ripken-esque streak that makes it Canada's longest-running musical and kicks the tail of anything running on Broadway. The play brings to the stage many of Montgomery's stories and characters for a 2-hour show, once or twice daily, from the middle of June through late September, usually on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Saturdays. Shows take place at 2pm and then again at 7:30pm (though every Monday, and throughout September, there are no matinees). Definitely call ahead, as tickets sometimes go fast during the limited summer run.

Confederation Centre of the Arts, 145 Richmond St., Charlottetown. ✆ **800/565-0278** or 902/566-1267. Mid-June through late Sept. Tickets C$55–C$75 adult, C$39–C$53 child, C$50–C$68 student and senior.

Avonlea ★ Kids This development of faux historic buildings opened in 1999, with the idea of creating the sort of a village center you might find in the Anne novels. (The actual Cavendish lacks anything remotely resembling a center, which makes sense since it's out in the middle of farmlands.) And, of course, the true goal is to entice paying tourists. The facility is on a big lot among amusement parks and motels, but several Anne-related buildings and artifacts are located at the site, including the actual one-room schoolhouse in which Montgomery taught (moved here from Belmont, about 48km/30 miles away) and a Presbyterian church she occasionally attended (moved about 16km/10 miles from Long River). There's also a variety show, hayrides, staff in period dress, a restaurant, several stores (including an art gallery and music shop), and tea, ice cream, and candy. But for what it delivers, it's a bit overpriced—except in September, when the cost of admission plunges.

8779 Route 6, Cavendish. ✆ **902/963-3050.** www.avonlea.ca. Day-pass admission C$19 adults, C$17 seniors, C$15 children 3–18, C$65 families; Sept admission C$10 per person flat fee. Musical variety show, small extra charge. Mid-June daily 10am–5pm; July–Aug 10am–6pm; Sept 10am–4pm. Closed Oct to mid-June.

Cavendish Cemetery ★ This historic cemetery, protected by a grove of trees, was founded in 1835 and is best known as the final resting spot for author Lucy Maud Montgomery. It's not hard to find her gravesite: Follow the pavement blocks from the arched entryway, which is across from the Anne Shirley Motel. She's buried beneath the same headstone as her husband, the Rev. Ewen MacDonald (thus the stone reads "MacDonald," not Montgomery).

Intersection of routes 13 and 6, Cavendish. Free admission. Open daily dawn–dusk.

Green Gables Heritage Place Overrated The best place to start an Anne tour is at Green Gables itself, but this place somewhat disappoints, even if it is the closest thing we have to the "real" fictional Green Gables. (The author's birthplace or favorite home, covered above and below, are equally authentic destinations.) The farmhouse here dates from the mid-19th century and belonged to cousins of Montgomery's grandfather; it is considered the chief inspiration for the Cuthbert farm in the books, and has since been furnished according to descriptions in the books. The home is operated by Parks Canada as part of the larger Lucy Maud Montgomery's Cavendish National Historic Site; as such, the parks department operates a helpful visitor center on the site where you can watch a short film about Montgomery, view a handful of exhibits, and explore the farm and trails. If you're a die-hard Anne fan, you'll no doubt delight in visiting settings where the literary characters ventured: Haunted Woods, Lover's Lane, and the like. But you'll need an

active imagination to edit out the golf carts puttering through the scenery at an adjacent golf course and the busloads of tourists crowding through the house and moving, herd-like, down the outdoor pathways. Come very early or very late in the day to avoid the biggest crowds. (Rumors still persist that the real Green Gables burned down a few years back, but it didn't; these conspiracy theories evidently stem from news reports about a minor fire here in 1997.)

2 Palmer's Lane (just off Rte. 6), Cavendish (just west of intersection with Rte. 13). ✆ **902/963-7874** or 963-7871 (off-season). Admission mid-June to late Aug, C$7.80 adults, C$6.55 seniors, C$3.90 children, C$20 families; rates discounted 25% May to mid-June and late Aug to Oct; rates discounted 50% Nov to Apr. May–Oct daily 9am–5pm; Apr and Nov, Sun–Thurs 10am–4pm; Dec to March by appointment only.

Lucy Maud Montgomery Birthplace A few miles south of the Silver Bush Anne of Green Gables Museum is this simple white home, where the author was born in 1874. Today the house is once again decorated in the Victorian style of Montgomery's era, and it includes mementos like the author's wedding dress and scrapbook. Just like the (separately owned and operated) Silver Bush, this is historically authentic and worth an hour, but only for die-hard Anne fans.

Intersection of routes 6 and 20, New London. ✆ **902/886-2099** or 902/836-5502. Admission C$3 adults, C50¢ children 6–12. Mid-May to mid-Oct daily 9am–5pm. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May.

Site of Lucy Maud Montgomery's Cavendish Home ★ Finally! The place where the girl behind the girl lived . . . sort of. Authoress Montgomery lived in a house on this site with her grandparents, Alexander and Lucy Macneill, from 1876 (when she was 21 months old) until 1911. She wrote *Anne of Green Gables* and her other books at the home, which unfortunately is no longer standing; visitors can roam the grounds and read interpretive signs and plaques about the property's literary history. There's also a small bookshop featuring books by and about the author. Again, as with so many others around the area, this site is mainly of interest to die-hard Anne buffs, but it does also give a nice flavor of the surroundings in which she worked and from which she drew inspiration. Admission is by donation; drop in something like C$3 per adult, more if you really, really like the place. Note that the bookstore closes down for the season earlier (October) than the full grounds (November).

Rte. 6. Cavendish (just east of Rte. 13 intersection). ✆ **902/963-2231.** Admission by donation. Mid-May to Oct daily 9am–5pm (July–Aug to 6pm). Closed Nov to mid-May.

Kids Family Fun

Cavendish has capitalized on its tourist allure with a handful of "museums" and theme parks to appeal to younger kids. All are located along Route 6 west of the intersection with Route 13. The small, manageable park known as **Sandspit** (✆ **902/963-2626**) has go-kart racing, an 18m (60-ft.) Ferris wheel, a roller coaster, bumper cars, and the like. There's no admission charge to visit the grounds—you can pay as you go. Rides cost three to five tickets, totaling perhaps C$3 to C$5 each—but if you'll be here awhile it's easier to just buy a bracelet that covers all the rides for C$12 to C$22 per person (you pay according to height). The park is open daily from mid-June until Labour Day.

Where to Stay

Cottage courts are to Cavendish as 19th-century inns are to Vermont, or B&Bs are to England—they're everywhere, and they vary tremendously in quality. Be aware that many of these cottage courts and motels are more interested in high volume and rapid turnover than personal attention to guests. A number also believe that hanging a straw hat or two on a door allows them to boast of "country charm," even if they have anything *but* charm.

If you've arrived in town without reservations, check the board at the **visitor information center** (see above), which lists up-to-the-minute vacancies. You might also find a great deal (people do) by asking local residents about under-the-table rentals; checking local bulletin boards at Laundromats and general stores; or browsing free local "shopper" newspapers. Certainly can't hurt. But it takes time and energy.

Cavendish Beach Cottages ★★ (Kids) Location, location, location. This compound of about a dozen closely spaced cottages is located on a grassy rise within PEI's lovely national park (the area where the best beaches are), just past the gatehouse to the park. The pine-paneled units come in one-, two-, and three-bedroom configurations, and while they won't win any prizes for design each does have a queen bed (most add another double bed or two, as well). And all of them feature direct ocean views, cable television, air-conditioning (not that you'll need it), kitchenettes with microwaves and dishwashers, and outdoor propane barbecue grills. Some have tubs while others have showers only, but generally speaking these are a great choice for couples and families—all the more so, since every cottage is no more than a 2-minute walk from the beach. The swingsets, playhouse, and picnic tables are the capper. There's also easy access right onto Gulf Shore Drive, where you find some of PEI's best walking and biking trails. No pets are allowed in the cottages, and all units are non-smoking.

1445 Gulf Shore Dr., Cavendish C0A 1N0 (mailing address P.O. Box 3088, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N9). ✆ **902/963-2025.** Fax 902/963-2025. www.cavendishbeachcottages.com. 13 units. Mid-June to Aug C$145–C$215 double, May to mid-June and Sept–early Oct C$95–C$140 double. MC, V. Closed early Oct to mid-May. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchenette, no phone.

Green Gables Bungalow Court ★★ (Value) Managed by the same folks as the good Cavendish Beach Cottages (see above) and located next to the "official" Green Gables house, this pleasant cluster of one- and two-bedroom cottages began as a government make-work project promoting tourism in the 1940s. As a result, the cottages are actually quite sturdily built, and they've been nicely arrayed beneath tall pines. Now that they've had some fresh coats of paints and repairs, they're also nice to look at, with painted shutters, flower boxes, little decks, and shady trees. Prices vary according to size; a large two-bedroom bungalow costs about 50% more than a tiny "efficiency" cottage. All units have kitchens with refrigerators, utensils, and coffeemakers, plus outdoor gas grills; some one-bedroom units have TVs, though they're in the minority. The linoleum floors and simple furnishings are far from luxurious, but serviceable. (Note that some cabins were trimmed with cheaper sheet paneling, while others have original pine paneling; ask about the latter. The beach is about a kilometer (⅔ of a mile) away, and there's a nice heated outdoor pool, kids' play area, high-speed Internet access, and coin-op laundry, too.

8663 Cavendish Rd. (Rte. 6), Cavendish, PEI C0A 1N0. ✆ **800/965-3334** or 902/963-2722. www.greengablesbungalowcourt.com. 40 cottages. C$70–C$149 double, C$699–C$999 weekly. AE, MC, V. Closed Oct–June. **Amenities:** Heated outdoor pool. *In room:* TV (some units), fridge, kitchenette, no phone.

Cavendish offers limited opportunities for creative dining, though it's well stocked with places offering hamburgers, fried clams, and the like. Both restaurants listed below require an easy, 10- to 15-minute drive via country roads from Cavendish, but they're worth it. (Also see the "PEI's Seasonal Lobster Suppers" box, p. 234 below, for info on a uniquely PEI style of family dining.)

Café on the Cly de ★★ Value Kids CANADIAN This cafe is part of the popular **Prince Edward Island Preserve Co.** (p. 232), itself a worthwhile stop for the delicious homemade preserves sold here. But now foodies have a second reason to make the trip: Light meals are served in a bright, modern-looking dining room just off the showroom. The cafe serves three meals a day: Breakfasts run to French toast, granola, bread with the eponymous preserves, or a hearty country platter, while lunch choices include seafood chowder, sandwiches and wraps, fish cakes, lobster quiche, and those famous PEI mussels. Dinner could be cedar-planked salmon with blueberry sauce, a seafood baked, or rib-eye steak. Finish with maple ice cream crepes or one of the other delectable cakes, pies, or cheesecakes. There's also beer and wine, a kids' menu, and jazz guitar (on weekend nights). Just be prepared for the tour-bus crowd: Buses get their own parking lot here, close to the door. Still, this is a legitimate dining destination in an area where eats are few and far between.

Intersection of routes 224 and 258 (4 miles south of Rte. 6, on Rte. 13), New Glasgow. ✆ **902/964-4301.** Reservations recommended for dinner. Main courses C$7–C$10 at breakfast and lunch, C$13– C$17 at dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. July–Aug daily 9am–9pm; June and Sept limited hours. Closed Oct–May.

Olde Glasgow Mill Restaurant ★ CANADIAN This casual restaurant, originally built as a late-19th-century feed mill in twee little New Glasgow, has been a restaurant since 1997 and is nicely shielded from the tourist throngs over in Cavendish. The place overlooks a small pond and features an eclectic assortment of regional meals. Appetizers include seafood chowder, along with salads and PEI mussels. Lunch entrees are uncomplicated (pizza, crepes, salads, turkey burgers, fajitas), while dinner is a more serious affair. Once you get beyond the expected items (Atlantic salmon; scallops), you'll find such choices as a rack of lamb encrusted in herbs, served with the traditional mint; lobster thermidor; peppered steaks; chicken glazed with maple and stuffed with vegetables and Brie; and a few inventive pastas, adulterated with such elements as basil, curry, seafood, and zucchini. A six-course "chef's tasting menu" kicks things up a notch higher still.

5592 Rte. 13, New Glasgow. ✆ **902/964-3313.** Reservations recommended. Lunch C$9–C$12; dinner C$14–C$29. AE, MC, V. June–early Oct Mon–Sat noon–10pm, Sun 10am–10pm. Closed early Oct–May.

NORTH & SOUTH RUSTICO TO BRACKLEY BEACH

A few miles east of Cavendish are the Rusticos, of which there are five in all: North Rustico, South Rustico, Rusticoville, Rustico Harbour, and Anglo Rustico. (Don't feel bad if you can't keep them straight.) It's a fun, relaxing place to head if you're seeking beaches, small harbors, and friendly locals.

The region was first "settled" by Acadians in 1790, and many present-day residents are descendants of those original settlers. (This was one of the first Canadian regions to be populated by Acadians following the Treaty of Paris, and is the oldest Acadian presence on PEI.) The Rusticos are attractive villages with far fewer tourist traps and auto traffic than Cavendish—which means they're much easier to explore by car or bike. Out of the

hubbub, they're all still close enough to the national park *and* Anne's land to work well as a base. And the island's famous beaches are virtually at your doorstep.

Where to hunker down? Most travelers choose North or South Rustico. **North Rustico** ★ clusters around a scenic harbor with views out toward Rustico Bay. Leave time for parking, walking around, perusing deep-sea fishing opportunities (see below), and peeking into shops. The village curves around Rustico Bay to end at North Rustico Harbour, a sand spit with fishing wharves, summer cottages, and a couple of informal restaurants. A wood-decked promenade follows the water's edge from town to harbor, a worthy destination for a quiet afternoon ramble or a picnic. Also here is **Outside Expeditions** (✆ **800/207-3899** or 902/963-3366; www.getoutside.com), one of PEI's best outfitters; they offer sea kayaking excursions around the harbor and into surrounding areas (see "Sea Kayaking," earlier in this chapter).

To find **South Rustico** ★★, turn off Route 6 onto **Route 243** and ascend the low hill overlooking the bay. Here you'll find a handsome cluster of buildings that were once home to some of the most prosperous Acadian settlers. Among the structures is the sandstone **Farmers' Bank of Rustico Museum** ★ (✆ **902/963-3168**), beside the church. A bank that's historic? In this case, yes.

The bank was established with the help of a visionary local cleric, the Reverend Georges-Antoine Belcourt, in 1864 to help local farmers get their operations into the black; Father and parishioners actually built the bank themselves, timber by timber, stone by stone. It then operated for some 30 years and helped inspire the credit union movement in North America before it was, ironically, forced to shut down by legislative banking reforms. The bank is open for tours from June through September, Monday through Saturday, 9:30am to 5:30pm, and Sundays 1 to 5:30pm. (You can call during the off-season and try to schedule a walk-through, as well, if you're in town.) Admission costs C$4 per adult, C$3 per senior, C$2 per student, and C$8 per family.

Right next door to the bank, there are two more structures worth checking out. **Doucet House** ★, a sturdy log building of Acadian construction dating from 1772, was the home of Jean Doucet, who arrived in these parts on a type of boat called a "shallop." It's believed that this might be the oldest extant home on the entire island. The house was moved from its waterside location in 1999 and completely restored—which it badly needed—and period furnishings have since been added to bring back that ages-old flavor. Its opening hours and admissions fees are the same as those for the Farmers' Bank; in fact, one ticket gets you into both.

Then there's the handsome **St. Augustine's Parish Church** (dating from 1838, with a cemetery beyond), also next door. If the church's door is open, enter and have a look around the graceful structure.

Brackley Beach ★ is the gateway to the eastern section of PEI's national park, and it has the fewest services of any town in these parts. It's just a quiet area, with no village center to speak of; it can be best appreciated by those who prefer their beach vacations untouched by civilization or noise.

Deep-Sea Fishing

PEI's north shore is home to the island's greatest concentration of deep-sea fishing boats. For something like C$25 to C$35 per person (check on the latest rates, but it's never very costly), you'll get about 3 hours' worth of time out on the open seas to fish for mackerel, cod, flounder, and the like. Don't worry about a lack of experience: All the necessary equipment is supplied for you, crewmembers are usually helpful as coaches, and some

 boathands will even gladly clean and fillet your catch before you debark so that you can easily cook it after you hop back onto dry land and drive back to your cottage.

In North Rustico, at any given time, at least a half-dozen captains offer fishing trips, including **Aiden's Deep Sea Fishing** (✆ **866/510-3474** or 902/963-3522; www.peifishing.com). There's also **Salty Seas Deep-Sea Fishing** (✆ **902/672-3246**), about a 20-minute drive east of North Rustico at Covehead Harbour (within the national park).

Shopping

Between Cavendish and Brackley Beach, you'll find a number of shops offering unique island crafts and products. Browsing is a good option on days when the weather isn't good enough to lure you to the beach.

Cheeselady's Gouda (Finds) This is a short detour off Route 6, but well worth it. Watch a brief video about the making of Gouda cheese, then get down to the real business of buying some of the excellent cheeses produced here. If you don't feel like the usual aged Gouda, try the flavored varieties, including those flavored with peppercorns, garlic, or herbs. Sizes range from a wedge to a wheel. Rte. 223, Winsloe North, southeast of Oyster Bed Bridge. ✆ **902/368-1506.**

The Dunes Studio Gallery and Café This architecturally striking modern gallery on the road to the eastern section of PEI National Park is among the best spots on the island to browse works produced by island artisans and craftspeople. Housed on two open levels, the gallery features pottery, furniture, lamps, woodworking, sculpture, and paintings, along with more accessible crafts such as handmade soaps and jewelry. The gallery is also home to gardens and an appealing **cafe** ★★, covered below in "Where to Dine." The gallery is open daily from May through October; the cafe, daily from June through September. Rte. 15, Brackley Beach. ✆ **902/672-2586** (gallery) or 902/672-1883 (café).

Gaudreau Fine Woodworking ★ Set among raking oystermen and purple lupine fields, this store sells woodworking made right on-premises by Jacques Gaudreau. Items for sale might range from big deep salad bowls to plates, elegant sushi trays, or even wrist rests for computer keyboards (crafted from bird's-eye maple). As a bonus, you can also browse a wide selection of pottery from regional potters while you're here. The shop is open daily from June through mid-October, and off season by appointment. Rte. 6, South Rustico. ✆ **902/963-2273.**

Prince Edward Island Preserve Co. PEI Preserve sells accessible luxury—a little piece of PEI to take home, if you will. The company makes a variety of preserves at a small factory in a lovely valley; you can sample whatever's currently for sale, and watch the preserve-making process through a glass window, right here. The single jars of jam are frankly a little pricey, but I've still been known to overstock on raspberry and champagne jam, sour cherry marmalade, or whatever else looked tasty when I blew through. There's a good cafe on-site, **Café on the Clyde,** open seasonally and serving everything from hearty breakfasts to surprisingly gourmet lunches and dinners (see, p. 230). Intersection of routes 224 and 258 (just off Rte. 13), New Glasgow. ✆ **902/964-4300.**

Where to Stay

Barachois Inn ★★ (Finds) Topped by a fine mansard roof, the proudly Victorian Barachois (pronounced bar-a-*schwa*) Inn was built in 1880 by a local merchant. It's located right amongst an impressive concentration of historic buildings (the Farmers' Bank, Doucet House, and a church among them) overlooking the bay in North Rustico;

you can enjoy both the historic village and the inn's fine garden during the space of a single evening stroll. Innkeepers Judy and Gary MacDonald bought the place as derelict property in 1982 and swiftly restored it, adding modern art to counterpoint the severe architecture and period antiques in which it's furnished. Depending on which room you book, you might find a canopy bed or claw-foot tubs when you arrive and turn your key; note that rooms on the third floor are a bit cozier than the spacious second-floor suites, though any room beneath these slanted eaves feel far removed from urban bustle. The newer MacDonald House next door adds four executive-style rooms and modern luxuries like a sauna, exercise bike, and meeting room—yet its architecture nicely echoes that of the original home. Packages abound; you can even book one that includes an Anne of Green Gables–themed carriage ride, gourmet dinner at a local restaurant, and a packed picnic lunch.

2193 Church Rd. (Hunter River R.R. 3), Rustico, PEI C0A 1N0. ✆ **800/963-2194.** www.barachoisinn.com. 8 units, 1 with private bathroom in hallway. C$125–C$235 double. Rates include full breakfast. Packages available. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov–Mar. **Amenities:** Sauna. *In room:* A/C, VCR, hair dryer, kitchenette, no phone.

Shaw's Hotel ★★ Kids You can't miss Shaw's, a delightfully old-fashioned hotel inside a Victorian farmhouse with a (fire-engine red!) mansard roof, down a tree-lined dirt road beside an inlet. This place has been in the same family since 1860, and even with a few recent touchups—a sun deck, bar, and dining-room expansion were completed in 1999 and more than two-thirds of the beds are now in outlying cottages—it still has the feel of a farm-stay vacation . . . during the 19th century. More than a dozen guest rooms are located in the upstairs section of the main building; they're "boarding-house style," a euphemism for "smallish." The 27 free-standing cottages on the property are the real stars, though they vary considerably in size and vintage; none are lavish, but they have the essentials (kitchenettes or cube refrigerators) and a few are downright comfy: double Jacuzzi, anyone? A few also have televisions, which the main inn lacks. While these newer cottages are fine, the older ones do have a certain rustic charm. (This is still the sort of place where you walk down a sandy lane to the beach.) The handsome dining room serves breakfast and dinner daily—guests can join a MAP plan for about $40 per person extra—with dinner choices that might include filet mignon, poached halibut, pasta with cream sauce, prime rib, rack of lamb, or lobster. (Yet it's not the stuffy place you'd expect from such a menu.) Abundant children's programs in summer, a kids' menu in the dining room, and a playground on premises all make Shaw's a good choice for families, too.

Rte. 15, Brackley Beach, PEI C1E 1Z3. ✆ **902/672-2022.** Fax 902/672-3000. www.shawshotel.ca. 38 units. C$75–C$145 double; C$120–C$240 suite; C$190–C$710 cottage. MAP plan about $80 per night additional (double occupancy). Packages available. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov to late May. "Well-mannered" dogs allowed in cottages only. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; canoe, kayak, and bike rentals; children's program. *In room:* TV (some units), fridge (some units), kitchenette (some units), no phone.

Where to Dine

This is PEI's best dining region. For fine dining, in addition to the two upscale selections listed below, you should also consider sampling the fare from the resort dining rooms at **Shaw's Hotel** (see "Where to Stay," above) and at **Dalvay by the Sea** ★★ (see p. 239). Both are excellent.

As I've just said, there's certainly plenty to eat in this area, but there's also a great local restaurant in Margate, the **Shipwright's Café,** about 24km (15 miles) due west of North Rustico on Route 6. Its menu falls somewhere between the refined gourmet fare of The

PEI's Seasonal Lobster Suppers

The north shore of Prince Edward Island is home to the regionally famous "lobster supper," a genre that probably wasn't invented here but has possibly been taken to new heights. They're a must-do excursion if you're craving local crustaceans.

The suppers took root years ago as informal pot-luck gatherings in local church basements; parishioners would bring covered hot dishes, while the church would provide lobster. The church netted a few dollars from these get-togethers, plus some serious bonding time in the name of the cause. But then a funny thing happened. Outsiders (including travel writers like me) began discovering these good deals and showing up out of the blue. As the fame of the dinners spread, several churches and copycats began formalizing and even advertising these dinners. Today, they're practically a cottage industry—a big one.

Expect good food, but don't expect intimacy. These suppers have become somewhat crowded and impersonal dining experiences—Fisherman's Wharf (see below) can accommodate up to 500 diners at one time alone—especially if you have the misfortune to pull up just as tour buses are unloading.

Still, you're here to eat, and eat you will. Lobster is always the main event, though you can usually order roast beef, ham, steak (you know, surf-and-turf) or other alternatives as well. Your entree might be accompanied by access to an all-you-can-eat buffet sporting a huge selection of rolls, salads, chowder, mussels, desserts, and other dishes. Or, in some cases, you order a set four-to-six-course prix fixe that might take in chowder, bread, mussels, salad, and dessert along the road to and from your lobster. Figure on spending C$25 to C$60 total per person for a big feed here, depending both on how big a lobster you order and the side options available.

St. Ann's Church Lobster Suppers (✆ **902/621-0635**) remains a nonprofit entity, just as it was in 1963 when it claims it created the first lobster supper on PEI. Housed in a modern church hall in the small town of St. Ann, just off Route 224 between routes 6 and 13, St. Ann's has a full liquor license and the home-cooked food is served at your table (unusually, you don't walk buffet lines here). Dinners are cooked here from mid-June through late September Monday through Saturday from 4 to 8:30pm daily except Sunday (as befits a church organization). Credit cards are accepted.

Fisherman's Wharf Lobster Suppers (✆ **877/289-1010** or 902/963-2669) in North Rustico boasts an 18m (60-ft.) salad bar to go with its lobster; it's open daily from noon to 9pm, mid-May to mid-October (shorter hours in May and June). It offers a children's menu.

And near the PEI Preserve Company in New Glasgow is the barnlike **New Glasgow Lobster Suppers** (✆ **902/964-2870**). Meals here include unlimited mussels and chowder, so they're a bit pricier; try a piece of lemon meringue pie afterward. It's located on Route 258 (just off Rte. 13), and is open daily from June through mid-October, 4 to 8:30pm. This eatery also offers roast beef suppers and a good kids' menu.

Dunes and the fried-up grub of a Jo-Joe's—and sometimes that middle ground is what you want to eat. See p. 263 for details about the cafe.

The Dunes Café ★★ CAFE Once simply the house cafe/coffeehouse of a local gallery (see "Shopping," above), the Dunes has gradually and consistently improved its cooking and upped its menu's ante—to the point where it's no longer just an afterthought, but rather serves lunches and dinners equal to those almost anywhere in rural PEI. Foodies are taking notice. This is a great spot for a gourmet lunch or dinner of island fish chowder, crab cakes, grilled chorizo, Asian spice-cured salmon gravlax, seafood cioppino, shrimp (or vegan) Pad Thai, curries, lamb-feta burgers, or one of the salads; it's amazing how the chef balances fresh local ingredients with international spices and influences. They also serve good coffee here, of course, as well as tea and knockout house cocktails at night—drinks like the gingery "A Dunes Life," the islandy "Fruit Oasis," and a "Capetown Collins" made with roiboos tea. The restaurant's kids' menu is considerate of the little ones.

Rte. 15, Brackley Beach. ✆ **902/672-1883.** www.dunesgallery.com. Lunch main courses C$8–C$14, dinner entrees C$17–C$32. MC, V. June–Sept daily 11:30am–10pm. Closed Nov–May.

Jo-Joe's Take Out Value Kids SEAFOOD This little shack overlooking Rustico Bay at a bend in the road is the place to go when you don't have time for a sit-down dinner on the far shores of the island. The menu here is simple—fried fish, clams, and scallops, more or less, plus burgers—and not especially healthy. But the portions are big, and they serve ice cream. Take a seat on the back deck to get a nice view of the water. This property is also home to a deep-sea fishing outfit called Joey's: Bad for the fish, good for you.

Rte. 6, Rusticoville (at the bridge). ✆ **902/963-2295.** Meals C$3–C$15. No credit cards. Daily 11am–8pm. Closed Sept to mid-June.

ORWELL ★★

In southeastern Queens County, the village of **Orwell** is a great little historic detour off busy Route 1, about 32km (20 miles) east of Charlottetown. (Route 1 is the fast main road travelers drive to get from C-town to Montague, the Murrays, Georgetown, or the Wood Islands ferry.) Both sites mentioned below are near each other on a side road; there are few landmarks other than simple signs directing you here, so keep a sharp eye out for the corner and the turnoff.

The **Orwell Corner Historic Village ★★** (✆ **902/651-8515**) is one of the most aesthetically pleasing historic parks in the province. One of several sites on the island managed by the PEI Museum and Heritage Foundation, the village re-creates life as it might have been in a small island town of the 1890s. You can visit a general store, stop by a blacksmith shop, or wander through lush gardens and make a picnic in the shade of a tree. Events scheduled during summer here include a "poultry day," kids' camps, group garden walks, folk-music performances, and even hands-on craft demonstrations: Strap on safety glasses and take a stab at smithing, if you're brave enough. Also be sure to ask for a schedule of the lively *ceilidhs* (Scottish concerts) of traditional music that are held weekly in a community hall every summer; there's an extra charge to attend these, but they're well worth it.

The village is open from 9:30am to 5:30pm daily in July and August; 9am to 5pm weekdays only in June; and 9am to 5pm Sunday to Thursday from September through early October, when it closes for the season. Admission is C$7.50 for adults, C$4.50 for children 6 to 18, and C$20 for families.

Impressions

The man who farms only for the money . . . is a fool, because one who can make money out of farming can make a good deal more out of something else. But for the man who would live a quiet, interesting, reasonable, and useful life there is no other occupation which affords so favorable an opportunity. It demands the exercise of every facility. Every movement of the day is full of surprise, and every effort has its immediate reward either in success or failure. For the finest minds it affords an outlet for activity; for the poorest it affords a living without the sordid accompaniment of poverty. And Prince Edward Island presents a field the freest for all who would live this life.

—Sir Andrew Macphail, 1912

A few minutes' drive from the village is the handsome, white-shingled **homestead of Sir Andrew Macphail** ★★ (✆ **902/651-2789**). Macphail, a gifted polymath born in this tiny village in 1864, gained renown as a doctor, pathologist, professor, writer, editor, and agricultural tinkerer; you learn a lot about his exceptional mind and career by walking through the house, which includes a handful of exhibits and some period furniture. (There's also a restaurant; see "Where to Dine," below.) But the real allure of this place is a stroll across the green lawn and through the 40-plus hectares (more than a hundred acres) of farmlands laced by several **trails** ★. These walks are lush, pastoral, and quiet, filled with the summer sounds of crickets and songbirds—a great antidote to city life.

Admission to the site is free, though donations are happily accepted. The house is open daily from spring through fall, with shorter hours in the shoulder seasons; see the restaurant listing ("Where to Dine," below) for hours. Also note that the gardens and grounds here remain open later into the fall, even after the home has closed.

Where to Dine

Sir Andrew Macphail Homestead ★ Value TRADITIONAL The simple restaurant is located within the peaceful, historic Macphail homestead (see above), and features a limited menu of locally classic dishes. Arrive early enough to take a leisurely walk through the grounds before eating, then request a table on the bright sun porch. The menu includes the Macphail haggis, a modern adaptation of a traditional Scottish meal which somehow omits the key ingredient (sheep stomach), as well as other dishes that could range from roast lamb to sole amandine. The menu always includes a vegetarian selection, and lunches run to soups, sandwiches, and salads.

Rte. 1, Orwell (travel 20 miles east of Charlottetown on Rte. 1 and turn left at Orwell). ✆ **902/651-2789.** Reservations requested for dinner. Main courses C$3–C$10 at lunch, C$12–C$16 at dinner. V. Thurs–Sat 11:30am–4:30pm; Wed and Sun 11am–7:30pm. Closed early Oct to late June.

4 PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND NATIONAL PARK ★★

Located along PEI's sandy north-central coast, Prince Edward Island National Park is big and it's small all at once. In total, the park encompasses just 40 skinny kilometers (25 miles) of red-sand beaches and wind-sculpted dunes topped by marram grass; salt

marshes; and gentle inlets. Even what length it possesses is broached in several places by broad estuarine inlets that connect to harbors; as a result, you can't drive the entire park's length in one stretch, but rather must break away from the coastal road (and views) and backtrack inland.

You don't mind, though, because this is *the* reason many people come to the island. These bright reddish sand, empty beaches, and lovely dunes define the park for a hefty percentage of PEI visitors. My advice? There's really little point in trying to tour the whole length of the park, since these beaches are all mostly similar-looking to each other. It's better to simply pick out one stretch of beach (say, near your hotel), stake a claim, and settle in and enjoy the gentle surroundings for a few days.

There's more to this national park than just beaches and dunes, by the way. Within its boundaries you can also find considerable woods and meadows, full of wildlife—you might spot the tracks of red foxes (who den in the dunes), muskrats, or mink. In the marshes and tidal flats, great blue heron stalk their aquatic prey near sunset. And, where beach and dune meet up, watch for the piping plover, a tiny, endangered beach bird that scratches its shallow, hard-to-spot nest right out of the beach sand.

The national park also administers the Green Gables house and grounds, but they're a bit of a drive from the beaches and a world apart from them, aesthetically speaking; see "Cavendish," earlier in this chapter, for details on what tourism officials call "Anne's Land."

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE From downtown Charlottetown, Route 15 (which passes the airport, then continues north) is the most direct route to central sections of the national park. To reach the lovely eastern sections and Dalvay by the Sea, you can also drive east on Route 2, then turn north on Route 6 at Bedford. Alternately, to reach the Cavendish (western) area and the attractive Rusticos most quickly, take Route 2 west to Hunter River, then turn north on Route 13. The entire drive from city to beach is probably 30 or 40km (20 or 25 miles) at most, yet it can still take up to 45 minutes or more, depending on traffic conditions.

Once arrived at the park, if you want to drive its length and survey it more closely, you'll be forced to use Route 6 to inch your way along it. Keep your cool; the route wiggles, waggles, and sometimes swells with summer traffic.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Cavendish Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **800/463-4734** or 902/963-7830), north of the intersection of routes 6 and 13, furnishes information on the park's destinations and activities. It opens daily from mid-May through early September.

Inside the park, the modern **Greenwich Interpretation Centre** (✆ **902/961-2514**) is open from 10am to 5pm, June through September. For other questions or during the off-season, the park administration (located in Charlottetown) can be reached at ✆ **902/672-6350.**

FEES The park is open year-round. Between June and early September, however, visitors must stop at one of the two tollhouses and pay entry fees. From July through September, the fees are C$7.80 adults, C$6.80 seniors, C$3.90 children ages 6 to 16, and C$20 per family; all these rates are discounted by 50% in June. Ask about multiday passes if you plan to visit for more than 3 days.

BEACHES

PEI National Park is home to two kinds of sandy beaches: popular, sometimes crowded strands with changing rooms, lifeguards, snack bars, and other amenities; and all the rest.

Where you go depends on your temperament. If it's not a day at the beach without the aroma of other people's coconut tanning oil, head for Brackley Beach or Cavendish Beach. (The latter is within walking distance of the Green Gables house and many amusements, thus making it good for families with kids; see "Cavendish," earlier in this chapter, for full details on said attractions.)

If you'd just as soon be left alone with the waves, sun, and sand, though, you need to head a bit farther afield—or just keep walking very far down the beaches from parking lots until you have left the crowds behind. I won't reveal the very best spots, for fear they'll get crowded. But suffice it to say they're out there. Get thee a map of the national park, and study it closely. A hint: "Fewer facilities" almost always translates to "far fewer people."

HIKING & BIKING

Hiking is limited in both quantity and drama in PEI National Park, especially when compared with the trails in Atlantic Canada's other national parks, but you can still find a number of pleasant strolls here. (Of course, there's also the beach, which is perfect for long leisurely walks.)

The park maintains more than a dozen trails in all, adding up to a total of 45km (28 miles), so there's plenty of room to roam.

Among the most appealing is the **Homestead Trail** ★, which departs from the Cavendish campground. The trail offers both a 6km (4-mile) loop and an 8km (5-mile) loop and skirts wheat fields, woodlands, and estuaries, with frequent views of the distinctively lumpy dunes at the west end of the national park. Very unusually, mountain bikes are allowed on this trail, so it can become a relatively busy place on sunny days. The two **short trails** at the Green Gables house—Balsam Hollow and Haunted Wood, each less than 2km (a mile)—are lovely but invariably crowded. Avoid them if you're looking for a relaxing walk in the woods. (Also, they require that you pay an additional Green Gables entry fee of up to C$8 per person.)

Cycling the seaside roads in the park is sublime. Traffic is generally light, and it's easy to make frequent stops along the way to explore beaches, woodlands, or the marshy edges of inlets. The two **shoreline roads** ★★ within the national park—between Dalvay and Rustico Island, and from Cavendish to North Rustico Harbour—are especially beautiful as sunset edges into twilight. As a bonus, there are snack bars located both at Brackley Beach and again at Covehead Bay.

It's easy to rent bikes in **Charlottetown,** year-round. There are two good rental outfits: **MacQueen's** (✆ **800/969-2822** or 902/368-2453; www.macqueens.com) at 430 Queen St. and **Smooth Cycle** (✆ **800/310-6550** or 902/566-5530) at 330 University Ave. Rentals at each run about C$25 per day.

If you make a last-minute decision to cycle, don't sweat it: You can also find hybrid and mountain bike rentals right *on* the beach, for roughly the same rates, at **Dalvay Beach Bike Rentals** (✆ **888/366-2955** or 902/672-2048). The facility is located at the venerable Dalvay by the Sea resort (see "Where to Stay & Dine," below). These folks even smartly offer a half-day package deal that includes a packed picnic lunch for two for about C$15 more.

CAMPING

Prince Edward Island National Park maintains excellent campgrounds, which open for the short season in mid-June, with hundreds of sites in total. This is one of the best ways

to enjoy the island, and it's not very expensive: Campground fees start at about C$25 per night, with serviced sites costing no more than C$35 per night.

The most popular (and first to fill) is **Cavendish,** located just off Route 6 west of Green Gables and in the park's western reaches. It has hundreds of sites, spread among piney forest and open, sandy bluffs; sites at the edge of the dunes overlooking the beach are the most popular, but most sites here frankly aren't especially private or scenic. A limited number of two-way hookups are available for RVs, and the campground also has free showers, kitchen shelters, and evening programs. Note that this campground closes for the season at the end of September.

The **Stanhope** ★ campground lies just across the park road from lovely Stanhope Beach, on the eastern side of the park (you enter through Brackley Beach). The park road isn't heavily traveled, so you don't feel very removed from water's edge. Most sites here are forested, and you're afforded more privacy here than at Cavendish; all things considered, it's a better choice. Two-way hookups, free showers, and kitchen shelters are offered. It's also open much later—until mid-November, amazingly, though I don't know anyone who has camped *then.*

Reserve a site at either by using the national park service's reservation website (**www.pccamping.ca**) or calling ✆ **877/737-3783** or 405/505-8302. Just remember: You can only reserve in advance until early September, at which point the reservation system shuts down.

You can try to walk on to either campsite, of course, but I wouldn't recommend trying at the height of summer and expecting a guaranteed spot—you might get shut out. In the shoulder seasons, things are much less hectic and you could show up last-minute.

WHERE TO STAY & DINE

See also my listings for "Cavendish" and "North & South Rustico to Brackley Beach," earlier in this chapter, for more choices in the vicinity of the park.

Dalvay by the Sea ★★ This imposing Tudor mansion was built in 1895 by Alexander MacDonald, a partner of John D. Rockefeller. It's unusually large for a private home, but feels intimate for a luxury inn. There are glimpses of the ocean across the road from the upper floors, though the home's design focuses on the freshwater pond out front. Inside, you'll be taken aback by extraordinary cedar woodwork in the main entryway and a grand stone fireplace. The 26 guest rooms are elegantly appointed, solid, and quiet, they have also been kept free of any phones or televisions to emphasize the natural setting. In the evening you hear the sounds of the sea (the inn overlooks one of the park's best beaches). Rates are steep, but breakfast and dinner are always included in your rate; ask about a breakfast-only plan if you want to save a bit. Eight newer, three-bedroom pine cottages are in big demand thanks to their size, open design, and amenities like wet bars and Vermont Castings propane stoves; book well ahead for those. Dalvay added a new pavilion-style **dining room** ★★ to the main inn in 1999; it blends nicely with the original architecture, and has good views of the gardens and pond. Under chef Andrew Morrison, the highly regarded kitchen turns out Continental dishes featuring the local seafood plus meat and fowl; expect choices like steamed island lobster, venison, grilled filet mignon, Atlantic salmon, or rack of lamb. Desserts are sublime; try a caramel mousse torte or the sticky date pudding with toffee sauce (once featured in *Gourmet* magazine). The hotel also serves afternoon tea each day from 2 to 4pm. Hike off all the calories at one of the many walking trails nearby.

 Rte. 6, Grand Tracadie (P.O. Box 8, Little York), PEI C0A 1P0. ✆ **888/368-2955** or 902/672-2048. Fax 902/672-2741 (summer only). www.dalvaybythesea.com. 34 units. June to late Sept C$284–C$404 MAP double, C$484–C$524 MAP cottage; extra charges for all children above age 3 and more than 2 adults. Rates include full breakfast and dinner. B&B rates and packages also available. National park entrance fees also charged. 2-night minimum in summer. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed late Sept to May. **Amenities:** 2 dining rooms; bike rentals; canoeing; croquet; horseshoes; lawn bowling; tennis court. *In room:* Fridge (cottages only), minibar (cottages only), no phone.

5 CHARLOTTETOWN ★★

It's not hard to figure out why PEI's earliest settlers situated the province's political and cultural capital where they did: It's on a point of land between two rivers and within a large protected harbor. For ship captains plying the seas, this quiet harbor with ample anchorage and wharf space was a welcome sight. Of course, travelers rarely arrive by water these days (unless a cruise ship is in port), but Charlottetown's harborside location and compactness still translate into a lovely setting today. This remains one of Atlantic Canada's most graceful and relaxed cities, and one of my very favorites to visit.

Named for Queen Charlotte (wife of the infamous King George III), metro Charlottetown and its suburbs are now home to about 60,000 people—nearly one out of every two islanders. To Canadians, the city is everlastingly famous for hosting the 1864 conference that 3 years later led to the creation of the independent Dominion of Canada. For that reason, you're never far away from the word *confederation,* which graces buildings, malls, bridges, everything. (In a historic twist of fate, PEI itself actually declined to join the new confederation it spawned for 9 years, until it relented in 1873. A good decision.)

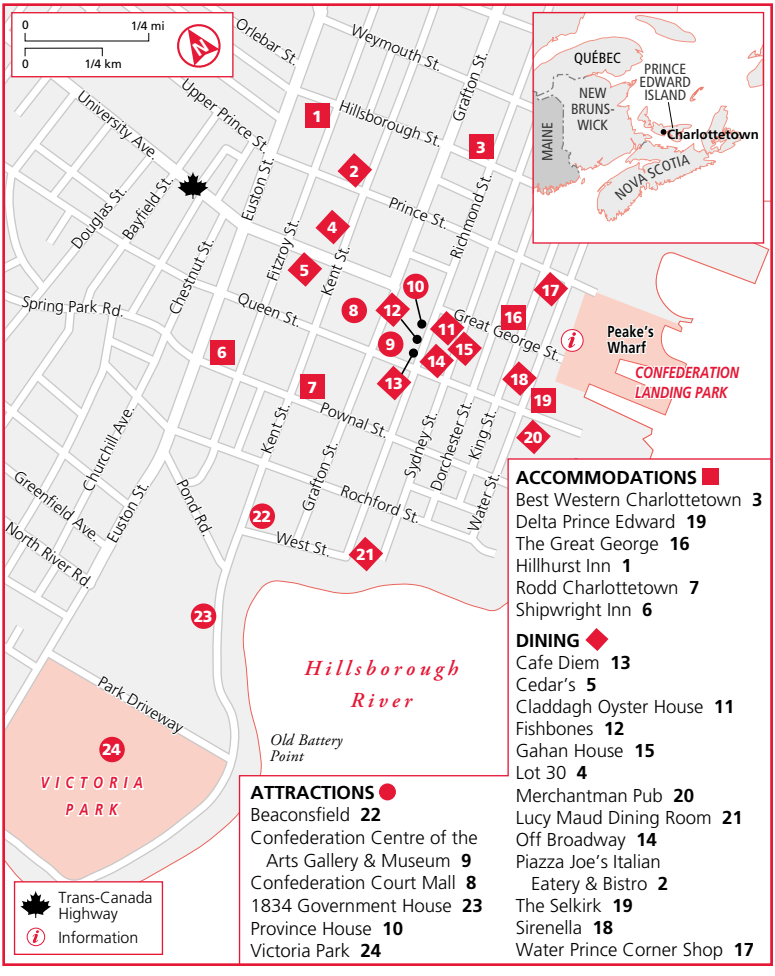
Today, the downtown has a brisk feel to it, with its mixture of modern and Victorian commercial buildings, government and cultural centers, buttoned-down bureaucrats and punks/folkies/artists hanging out around town. Outside the business core, you'll also find leafy streets and large, elegant homes dating from different eras (the most dramatic were built in the late 19th century). Charlottetown is also blessed with a number of pocket parks, which provide a quiet respite amid the gentle clamor. Its only negative? The suburbs off Route 2, where you'll find strip-mall clutter and traffic just like anywhere else in North America. Hey, nobody said this was paradise. (But if you're hankering for gasoline, fast food, or cheap clothes, this is your last pit stop before entering the historic center of town, so stock up.)

Charlottetown is centrally located and is a good base for exploring the rest of the island; only the western coast is too far for day-tripping. You can be touring Green Gables, relaxing on a north-shore beach, or teeing off at Brudenell Provincial Park—all within 45 minutes of leaving Charlottetown. The capital has by far the island's best selection of inns and hotels, though, plus a fine assortment of restaurants. You can dine out every night for a week, and still be pleasantly surprised each time—no fried-fish capital, this.

As for exploring the city itself, well, save that for a rainy day or early-morning and late-afternoon moments. You don't really need much more than a day to take in the highlights anyway. Still, it's a nice place to simply stroll the cobbles and chat amiably with locals midday or after work about the news or weather. In that sense, it's much like the compact city center of a Boston, Portland, Halifax, or Savannah.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Coming by car from the mainland and across the Confederation Bridge, Route 1 (the Trans-Canada Hwy.) makes more or less a straight shot east into



downtown Charlottetown. From the Woods Island ferry, you also take Route 1 (in fact, the route begins at the ferry dock), except you go west.

Charlottetown Airport (www.flypei.com) is just north of the city center. In summer, you can get here easily from either the U.S. or Canada via several carriers. **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) offers daily flights from Halifax, Toronto, and Montréal, and **WestJet** (✆ **888/937-8538;** www.westjet.com) also connects Charlottetown with Toronto.

If you're coming from Montréal by VIA Rail train, debark at Moncton and take an **Acadian** (✆ **800/567-5151;** www.acadianbus.com) bus to Charlottetown; the cost is C$35 per adult for the trip, which takes about 3 hours. If you're coming from Halifax,

PEI Express Shuttle (✆ **877/877-1771;** www.peishuttle.com) operates one daily van trip between Charlottetown and Halifax. The trip takes 4 to 5 hours and costs C$60 one-way for adults, C$55 for students and seniors, C$45 for children under age 12.

VISITOR INFORMATION The city's main **Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **902/368-7795**) is in a little historic building right beside the modern brick structure with a pavilion known as **Founders' Hall.** It's at the very end of Prince Street, at the entrance to Confederation Landing Park. (Brown question-mark signs also help direct you there.) This place is loaded with helpful staffers, an interactive computer kiosk, a cafe, free Internet, and an ample supply of brochures; there's also a vacancy board to let you know where rooms are currently available around town, and it's the jumping-off point for city-sponsored walking tours (for a charge). The center is open daily in July and August, weekdays only in the off season.

There's also a local tourism office, **Tourism Charlottetown** (✆ **800/955-1864**), nearby at 91 Water St.

EXPLORING CHARLOTTETOWN

Charlottetown is a compact city that's easy to walk around in. Focus on three areas: the waterfront, the downtown area near Province House and the Confederation Court Mall, and the parks and residential areas near Victoria Park.

You're best off first heading to the **information center** (see above), by the waterfront, for a little orientation and then starting your first tour right from there. That's because parking is generally scarce downtown, but relatively abundant near the visitor center, both on the street and in free and paid lots. At the visitor center, be sure to ask for a map and one of the free walking-tour brochures.

The **waterfront** is anchored by **Peake's Wharf,** a collection of touristy boutiques and eats that attracts hordes in summer. The complex offers good people-watching, plus a kid-friendly "marine touch tank" (watch out for the lobster spines), though it also has a somewhat formulaic "festival marketplace" feel to it and lacks true local character—except for the **free concert series,** which features local tunesmiths and a folksy vibe. Next to the wharf is **Confederation Landing Park** ★, an open, modern park with a boardwalk along water's edge; lush lawns; and benches nicely situated for lazing about awhile with the kids. There's also a big marina, where you can scope out the pleasure craft.

From the wharf, stroll up **Great George Street** ★★★, one of the best-looking streets in eastern Canada with its leafy trees, perfectly scaled Georgian row houses, and stately churches. At the top of Great George Street, stop into the **Province House** and **Confederation Centre of the Arts** (see below), then explore downtown's shops and restaurants.

For a pleasant walk affording fine water views, head southwest on **Kent Street** (just north of the Confederation Mall). At 2 Kent St., you'll see **Beaconsfield** ★ (✆ **902/368-6603**), a mansard-roofed mansion designed in 1877 by local architect William Harris for a prosperous shipbuilder. The architecture boasts an elegant mix of Georgian symmetry and Victorian exuberance, and rooms are furnished in high Victorian style. The home, operated by the Prince Edward Island Museum and Heritage Foundation, hosts lectures and events throughout the year. It's open daily in summer from 10am to 4:45pm, and daily except Saturdays in September from noon to 4pm. Call ahead for opening hours if you'll be visiting outside of the July-to-August season; it's open sporadically at other times. Admission is C$4.25 adults, C$3.25 students, C$12 families, and free for children under 12.

From Beaconsfield, look for the boardwalk that follows the edge of the harbor for about a mile into **Victoria Park** ★★, a quiet place of ballfields and grassy picnic areas.

This walk along the water has unobstructed views of the harbor and Northumberland Strait.

Along the way, look for the handsome **Government House** ★★ (✆ **902/368-5480**), also known as Fanningbank. Built in 1834, this sturdy white-shingled residence with eight Doric columns is set back on a broad lawn. It's the official residence of the island's lieutenant governor—a former vocal soloist and choral teacher—who serves as the Queen of England's personal representative to the province. The home is only opened to the public in July and August, on weekdays from 10am to 4pm, when there are guided tours on the half-hour. (The grounds are also open to the public, but again only in summer.) The place probably looks familiar to you if you've been in Charlottetown for a few days: That famous photo of the Fathers of the Confederation you see everywhere around town was taken on the front portico.

Confederation Centre Art Gallery ★ Value Part of the Confederation Centre of the Arts (which includes three theaters; see "Charlottetown After Dark," later in this chapter), this is the largest art gallery in Atlantic Canada. The center is housed in a bland, gray, boxy complex of sandstone and glass—a casualty of the "modern" architecture wave that swept the continent in the 1960s and 1970s. (Canadian writer Will Ferguson has referred to the building as "one of the greatest unprosecuted crimes of urban planning in Canadian history.") Inside, however, the gallery is spacious and well arranged on two levels, featuring displays from a 15,000-piece permanent collection as well as imaginatively curated changing exhibits. And admission is free. Shows might range from an exhibit on Canadian legal history to knit rugs from war-torn Afghanistan, from Uruguayan paintings to photographs of islands. The museum focuses partly on hanging the work of up-and-coming Canadians such as Inuit artist Annie Pootoogook, weaver Rilla Marshall, and painter Walter Tandy Murch. Spend an hour or more here if you appreciate art.

145 Richmond St. ✆ **902/628-6142.** www.confederationcentre.com. Mid-May to late Aug daily 9am–5pm; rest of the year Wed–Sat 11am–5pm, Sun 1–5pm.

Province House National Historic Site ★ PEI's official legislative building, this imposing landmark of sandstone was built in 1847 in an area set aside by town fathers for administration and churches. When it served as a colonial legislature, the massive building rose up from vacant lots of dust and mud; but today, as the provincial legislature, it's ringed by handsome trees and an inviting lawn. A bustling downtown area lies just beyond it. The building occupies a special spot in Canada's history: This is the place where the details of the Confederation were hammered out in 1864. (During the 1980s, the building was restored to appear as it would have looked in that year.) Start your tour by viewing a film that documents the process of confederation. Afterward, wander the halls and look in on the Legislative Assembly, where the island's legislators have been meeting since 1847. It's surprisingly tiny, but that's appropriate given that PEI's legislature has just 27 members—the smallest in Canada. Especially impressive is the second-floor Confederation Chamber, where a staffer is usually on hand to explain the place and answer that burning question: Why did PEI wait 9 years to join Canada? History buffs could spend an hour here.

2 Palmer's Lane. ✆ **902/566-7626.** Free admission (donations requested). June–Oct daily 8:30am–5pm; rest of the year Mon–Fri 8:30am–5pm.

SHOPPING

Charlottetown has a number of shops and boutiques, but they're not as diverse and creative as you might guess. More creative crafts can be found elsewhere around the island, especially along the north shore.

Peake's Wharf on the waterfront contains a number of shops, most of them tourist-oriented. It's a good destination if you're in search of that souvenir mug/tee-shirt/bumper sticker emblazoned with PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND or some such slogan. You'll also find casual dining and ice cream here.

The **Confederation Court Mall** (✆ **902/894-9505**), downtown right across from the Province House at 134 Kent St., is bigger and better. Architecturally, the 90-store complex blends in nicely with its historic neighbors. Inside, though, the place is less distinctive—nice, but the food courts, escalators, and chain stores look like upscale malls anywhere else. Come chiefly if you (or your kids) need a rainy-day shopping fix.

Anne of Green Gables Store Everything Anne, from dolls to commemorative plates. There's another branch in Avonlea Village. Of course. 110 Queen St. ✆ **902/368-2663.**

The Bookman Located across from the mall, this small shop has the city's best selection of used books, with a strong inventory of PEI and Canadian titles. 177 Queen St. ✆ **902/892-8872.**

Cows PEI's local answer to Ben & Jerry's, plus tons of cow-themed T-shirts and other bovine whimsy. Ice-cream flavors here include Wowie Cowie Coffee Toffee Crunch and Cotton Candy Bunny Tails. Look for other locations popping up around town and the island. 150 Queen St. ✆ **902/892-6969.**

The Kitchen Store Serious cooks trek to this kitchen store for the elegant, stainless-steel Paderno brand cookware made right on-island (with heat-conducting pads); these pots and pans are so dependable that they come with a 25-year warranty. The store also sells other high-quality kitchen items. (If you want even more Paderno, there are a half-dozen outlet stores scattered around the island.) Confederation Court Mall (Grafton St.). ✆ **902/566-2252.**

Northern Watters Knitwear This knit shop sells a diverse line of unusually well-made sweaters handcrafted right here on PEI. They can also be purchased at shops in the other eastern provinces, and at the Rustico Bay Wool Sweater Shop in North Rustico. 150 Richmond St. ✆ **800/565-9665** or 902/566-5850.

WHERE TO STAY

If you're traveling on a tight budget, there are a number of moderately priced motels situated along the main access roads running into and out of town (namely, routes 1 and 2), and also out by the airport. These places offer little joy beyond the savings to your pocketbook, but if cost is a prime consideration, they'll do—and they're all a short drive from the central attractions. Properties with double rooms for less than C$100 per night include **Royalty Maples Cottages** (✆ **800/831-7829** or 902/368-1030) on Route 2 north of the city center, with six motel units from May through December, and the **Winfield Motel** (✆ **800/267-5525**), where 16 of the 18 units don't crack the century mark. It's located right where routes 1 and 2 merge, north of the city near the university.

If you want a motel even closer to town—one within easy walking distance of everything, in fact—try the **Best Western Charlottetown** ★ (✆ **800/528-1234** or 902/892-2461), in two buildings (one a brick mélange, one surprisingly attractive in a shingled-cottage way) across the street from each other at 238 Grafton St. (a couple blocks east of the Confederation Court Mall). Of course, you're paying more due to the very central location, pool, hot tub, and fitness center; rooms and suites range from around C$100 up to as much as C$235 per night in peak season; check all rate configurations

carefully (AAA and CAA discounts are applied if you're a member). But parking is free, which saves you some dough.

Expensive

Delta Prince Edward ★★ (Kids) A 10-story hotel overlooking the harbor, the Prince Edward is stocked with business-travel amenities like coffeemakers, hair dryers, very helpful customer service, and cordless phones (in about half the rooms). The very best "deluxe" rooms are furnished in reproduction Georgian-style furniture, and have two-person Jacuzzis; others have more standard oak and beige laminate furnishings. Higher rooms have better views, and there's a premium for water views, but the city views are actually nicer than those—and you can usually still glimpse the water anyway. The hotel added a new class of apartment-like "Home Suites" in 2009, good for extended stays. Kids seem to enjoy the kiddie wading pool indoors, while adults hang out in an adjacent heated lane pool and hot tub, or work out in a fitness center that has Nordic track machines and even a tanning booth. There's now a new day spa here, as well. The venerable **Selkirk** restaurant (see below) is one of the city's top fine-dining venues, with fancy service and presentation complementing the menu. If that's too rich for your blood, head for the **Selkirk Lounge.** Raining outside? No worries: This hotel even has a golf simulator. Note that the lowest-priced rooms, however, do not include free high-speed Internet access. Other rooms do.

18 Queen St., Charlottetown, PEI C1A 8B9. ✆ **888/890-3222** or 902/566-2222. Fax 902/566-2282. www.deltaprinceedward.com. 211 units. Peak season C$169–C$390 double, C$225–C$905 suite; call for off-season rates. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking C$19, self parking C$15 per day. Pets allowed. **Amenities:** Restaurant; lounge; babysitting; concierge; fitness room; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; room service; sauna; spa; golf simulator. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units).

The Great George ★★★ The Great George opened in 1997 and quickly established itself as Charlottetown's classiest inn address. A complex rather than a single inn, the property encompasses a collection of striking buildings on and around historic Great George Street, most of which were rescued from states of former disrepair. (You can learn the story from a series of black-and-white photographs in the lobby.) Two dozen rooms are located in the 1846 Pavilion Hotel; others are in smaller, brightly painted townhouses and homes nearby. All have been thoroughly updated and refurbished with antiques, down duvets, and early black-and-white prints; and nearly all rooms are carpeted. There's quite a variety of styles and configurations here, from basic rooms on up—the most expensive units have fireplaces and Jacuzzis, but many others have claw-foot tubs good for soaking in. Room 403 has pine floors, a tub, and lots of light, while room 308 has a Shaker-style canopy bed, two-person Jacuzzi, and gas fireplace; families or couples might ask about one of the renovated suites. There's a small garden in back, and DVD players and fax machines are supplied on request.

58 Great George St., Charlottetown, PEI C1A 4K3. ✆ **800/361-1118** or 902/892-0606. Fax 902/628-2079. www.thegreatgeorge.com. 54 units. C$175–C$350 double; C$219–C$899 suite. Rates include continental breakfast. Packages available. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Babysitting; fitness room; limited room service. *In room:* A/C, TV (some units), hair dryer, kitchen (some units).

Shipwright Inn ★★★ Even though it's located right in the city, the Shipwright has a settled, pastoral feel to it—a perfect combination, and very PEI. The sturdy Victorian home was built in the 1860s by a local shipbuilder, and later expertly renovated and refurbished. It's decorated in period furniture, without the over-the-top Victorian floral

thing that dampens so many B&Bs. Rooms here are kitted out with surprisingly modern amenities such as phones, televisions, and VCR or DVD players. All of the rooms also show off gorgeous wooden floors (some made from ship-planking). Among the best units are those with something extra: The romantic Officer's Wardroom, a suite with an Asian feel, has a living room, private balcony, fireplace, headboard made from the inn's original doors, and a skylight-view Jacuzzi. The Crow's Nest unit features a king bed, claw-foot Jacuzzi (really), double-sided fireplaces, attractive unvarnished wood furniture, and a shared deck. The other seven units, including some relatively simple ones, are also each distinctive and handsome. The business center, with its computer and fax machine, is a nice bonus; afternoon tea service is a good introduction to the island; and the innkeepers and staff are unfailingly helpful.

51 Fitzroy St., Charlottetown, PEI C1A 1R4. ✆ **888/306-9966** or 902/368-1905. Fax 902/628-1905. www.shipwrightinn.com. 9 units . Mid-May to mid- Oct C$149–C$299 double; rest of the year C$99–C$199 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Dining room; massage. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (most units), hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units), kitchenette (some units), minibar.

Moderate

Hillhurst Inn ★ A fine mansion built in a fine neighborhood three blocks northeast of Province House around the turn of the 19th century, Hillhurst features a number of nice touches—including some extraordinarily detailed woodworking carved by early shipbuilders throughout the home. Rooms here vary in size and style, but all have been upgraded over time for a modern age; all now have phones, air-conditioning, televisions, and so forth. Two even have Jacuzzis. As is often the case, third-floor rooms require a bit of a hike, and are smaller and cozier than rooms on the second floor. Only drawback? Many of the bathrooms are on the smallish side (some had to be shoehorned into former closets), and the furnishings are perhaps a bit less historic and creative than those at the comparatively priced Shipwright down the street.

181 Fitzroy St., Charlottetown, PEI C1A 1S3. ✆ **877/994-8004** or 902/894-8004. Fax 902/892-7679. www.hillhurst.com. 9 units. Mid-June to late Sept C$135–C$235 double; spring and fall C$99– C$165 double. Closed Dec–Apr. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (some units).

Rodd Charlottetown ★ Built in 1931 of handsome brick by CN Railways, this five-story business hotel—now part of the eastern provinces' Rodd Hotel mini-empire—is right next to a shady park, just a few minutes' walk from most of downtown's attractions. It features Georgian flourishes inside and out, and has been updated and remodeled with a nod to its heritage. (The dusky lobby has the feel of a prewar Manhattan apartment building, with its vaulted ceiling and echoing floors.) Rooms have been tastefully remodeled in the mid-'90s with reproduction-period furniture. There are several newer suites, and the rooftop patio is also worth a look. A low-ceilinged indoor pool is open to guests on the ground floor. The hotel's **Chambers Restaurant** is open daily for dinner and features hotel favorites such as prime rib and salmon; there's also a lobby bar.

Kent and Pownal sts. (P.O. Box 159), Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7K4. ✆ **800/565-7633** or 902/894-7371. Fax 902/368-2178. www.rodd-hotels.ca. 115 units. C$109–C$250 double; C$185–C$350 suite. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. Pets accepted (C$10 charge). **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; babysitting; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; limited room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

WHERE TO DINE

For a quick pick-me-up while traversing the city, try **Beanz Espresso Bar & Café** at 38 University Ave. (✆ **902/892-8797**), just a block from Province House. The espresso drinks are good, and they also sell pastries, sandwiches, soups, and other light items.

A block north from Beanz, **Cedar's Eatery** at 81 University Ave. (✆ **902/892-7377**) is a locally popular spot for inexpensive meals. Lebanese dishes are the specialty: things like *yabrak* (stuffed vine leaves) and *kibbe* (ground beef with crushed wheat and spices). There are also sandwiches and burgers. They're also open late for Charlottetown, until 11pm—a boon when you've got the late-night munchies.

Claddagh Oyster House ★ SEAFOOD Despite the Irish name and the Olde Dublin Pub downstairs, the Claddagh Room isn't a place where you eat bad corned beef. Instead, as the name indicates, it's a place for seafood—starting with the famous local PEI oysters and mussels, which have become a focus of the place. A seafood chowder is good as a starter, as are the lobster spaghetti, lobster strudel, and lobster-crab cakes with a lemony remoulade. Seafood entrees include boiled lobster, a seafood platter, seared scallops with ginger-pea puree, and PEI-farmed halibut; there are also grilled steaks, Moroccan-spiced rack of lamb, a beef tenderloin topped with crab and sided with whipped potato, and other landlubber entrees. There are no harbor views here, but the preparation and service here are a notch above that at most other fish joints. There's also a great, convivial vibe as locals pop in for the live Irish music and beer downstairs.

131 Sydney St. ✆ **902/892-9661.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$22–C$30; oysters C$2 each. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2pm; Sun–Thurs 5–10pm; Fri–Sat 5–10:30pm.

Lot 30 ★★★ FUSION Gordon Bailey has struck again! The enfant terrible (self-described as a "biker chef") and former Dayboat restaurant owner has reappeared with this downtown Charlottetown gem. Bailey reportedly uses no freezers in his restaurants, only fresh items from the market, and it shows. Start with one of his creative seafood appetizers such as white wine and white-cheddar steamed mussels, a cioppino incorporating seared salmon, house-cured pork, or voluptuous salads constructed of cashews, feta, lobster, and other goodies. Entrees are more spread out between land and sea, running to such choices as butter-poached lobster with fingerling potatoes, beef short ribs, ribeye steaks, pan-roasted salmon with Thai black rice, baked Arctic char, bacony sea scallops, grilled duck breast with Yukon gnocchi, and duets of lamb or pork prepared two distinct ways. The rotating desserts are as fancy and well prepared as you'd expect them to be: panna cotta, crème brûlées, a chocolate-peanut butter mousse with peanut sauce, and assorted other tarts and cakes. If you're a serious foodie, don't pass up a chance to dine here while on island.

151 Kent St. ✆ **902/629-3030.** w ww.lot30restaurant.ca. Reservations recommended. Main courses $20–$35. MC, V. Tues–Sun 5–9pm. Closed Jan.

Lucy Maud Dining Room ★★ REGIONAL The Lucy Maud is located on the respected Culinary Institute of Canada's Charlottetown campus. The building is a bit institutional and charmless, and the 80-seat dining room has much the feel of a hotel restaurant. But nice touches like custom china offset the lack of personality, and there's a lovely view of the bay and Victoria Park from the big windows. Best of all, diners taste some excellent island cuisine, prepared and served by Institute chefs in training. Lunch and dinner menus change every semester. Typical dinner entrees could be anything from duck or venison (the kitchen is known for its venison) to chicken, steaks, and seafood prepared with local twists such as blueberry puree. There's always salmon on the menu, and sometimes a curry-inflected seafood chowder. A wine list is also available.

4 Sydney St. ✆ **902/894-6868.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$8–C$13 at lunch, C$15–C$28 at dinner. AE, MC, V. Tues–Fri 11:30am–1:30pm; Tues–Sat 6–8pm. Closed holiday weekends and Oct–May.

Off Broadway ★ CONTINENTAL This friendly upscale restaurant has the *look* of an intimate, wood-paneled English eating house, but there's a lot of French in the kitchen. Lunches feature lobster and prime rib sandwiches, coq au vin, chevre tarts, plus local seafood chowder, oysters, and steamed mussels. At dinner, the dimness can be downright romantic, though the proximity of other diners might be a slight deterrent to popping the question. Entrees run to steaks, salmon, changing fish specials of the day, island shellfish, and rack of lamb. The **42nd Street Lounge** upstairs opens at 4:30pm daily, and is a nice place to knock back a drink or two pre-theater, while weekends feature brunch both days until 3pm.

125 Sydney St. ✆ **902/566-4620.** Reservations recommended. Lunch items C$10–C$15; dinner entrees C$17–C$35. AE, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 11am–10pm.

The Merchantman Pub ★★ Finds FUSION More upscale than a bar, less fancy than a sit-down dining room, the Merchantman broke new ground when it opened in the mid-'90s. It's as close a thing to a "gastropub" (pub serving gourmet food) as there is on this island; even the nachos are gourmet. The kitchen specializes in seafood, often cooked with Thai or Cajun spices, but they cook a little of everything. Start with lobster bruschetta (yes, please), bacon-dusted scallops, local mussels or oysters, crab cakes, or a bowl of chowder. You could then move on to hearty sandwiches (smoked meat on rye, steak on a baguette), island fish cakes, or a burger from the pub menu and be plenty happy. But you can also order something considerably more substantial and refined—and here's where the place separates itself widely from other drinking houses around town. Gourmet items include a pair of aged beef medallions served with a whiskey lemon butter sauce; seared rainbow trout; lobster linguine; rack of lamb in a rhubarb-wine sauce; or a piece of barbecue-roasted salmon. Sweetish desserts, including a maple tart, complete the menu.

23 Queen St. ✆ **902/892-9150.** Pub and gourmet items C$8–C$25. MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11:30am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11:30am–11pm; Sun 11am–10pm.

Piazza Joe's Italian Eatery and Bistro ITALIAN Piazza Joe's, located in a historic building one long block from the Confederation Mall, has gone a bit overboard with the Tuscan hues and fake ivy climbing fake trellises. But the place is pleasantly casual, offering friendly service, a big menu, and plenty of comic-book-type mixed drinks to match the decor. (It's also one of the best spots for a late-night meal in early-to-bed Charlottetown, if you arrive behind schedule.) The wood-fired pizza is good, and there's a build-your-own-pasta option. Lasagna, veal, burgers, steaks, seafood, and some pub-styled items round out the menu.

189 Kent St. ✆ **902/894-4291.** Reservations accepted. Main courses C$10–C$39; individual pizzas C$7 and up. AE, DC, MC, V. Sun–Thurs 11am–10pm; Fri–Sat 11am–11pm.

The Selkirk ★★★ CANADIAN/FUSION Charlottetown's most stylish restaurant is right in the lobby of the high-end Delta Prince Edward hotel (see "Where to Stay," above). Yet it has a more informal character than many hotel dining rooms, with an eclectic mix of chairs and a piano player providing a soundtrack. The menu is also more ambitious and creative than it has to be; lunch choices begin with fish and chips and burgers, but also include steak sandwiches, veggie Wellington, and pasta carbonara with scallops. Dinners might start with a grilled chicken brochette, a bowl of local seafood chowder, wine-steamed island mussels, or a salad of local greens and goat cheese; main courses from chef Mark Gregory could include a full lobster dinner, a cut of beef tenderloin, a filet of haddock, or some pan-seared scallops. Standard hotel-dining selections, to

be sure, but they're prepared right—and for a price that's not nearly as high as you'd expect. The lobby location gets noisy at times, though, so try for a table under the mezzanine, nearer to the piano.

18 Queen St. (in the Delta P rince Edwar d). ✆ **902/566-2222.** Reser vations r ecommended. L unch entrees C$12–C$21; dinner entr ees C$18–C$25. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. M on–Fri 7am–1:30pm and 5:30–9pm; Sat 7–11am and 5:30–9pm; Sun 7am–2pm and 5:30–9pm.

Sirenella ★ (Kids) ITALIAN Restaurateur Italo Marzari was already running Italian eateries in two other Maritime Provinces when he decided to open Sirenella on PEI in 1992. Right across from the Delta Prince Edward, it has since become a popular spot. When all systems are functioning smoothly, it's a decent family option. Locals swear by dishes such as veal; grilled calamari; "mussels in love" (cooked in Pernod); ravioli stuffed with ricotta, spinach, and prosciutto; and the seafood pastas. They also serve lobster, garnished with the famous local shellfish. This restaurant is tucked on a quiet side street and is tiny enough to be considered either romantic or claustrophobic, depending on your take. There's a patio for outdoor dining and a kids' menu for the little ones.

83 Water St. ✆ **902/628-2271.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$14–C$27 at dinner. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2pm and 5–10pm; Sat 5–10pm.

Water Prince Corner Shop ★★ (Finds) SEAFOOD You don't often find a lobster pound in the heart of a historic district of a city, but that's what this place is: a hidden gem, tucked into an attractive building at Water and Prince streets. It looks at first glance like a newsstand or convenience store. Inside, though, you'll find one of the city's most convivial seafood joints, serving lobster dinners, seafood chowder, cooked mussels, and lobster rolls to an appreciative mixture of tourists and locals. There's a liquor license if you want to tip a few, and simpler items like burgers and chicken fingers for the kids or the shellfish-allergic. If the weather's good, try to get a seat on the street near sundown: You can see the waterfront from some tables. They also ship lobsters and meals by air. That exceptionally rare blue lobster mounted on the wall? It was caught off the west coast of PEI in 2002. It's a 1-in-10-million occurrence.

141 Water St. ✆ **902/368-3212.** Reservations recommended. Lunch C$4.95–C$11, dinner C$6.95–C$25. AE, DISC, DC, MC, V. May–June and Sept–Oct daily 9am–8pm; July–Aug daily 9am–10pm.

CHARLOTTETOWN AFTER DARK

One good resource for planning evening adventures is *The Buzz,* a free monthly newspaper that details ongoing and special events around the island with an emphasis on Charlottetown. It's widely available; look for it in visitor centers or at area bars and restaurants. You can read an online version at **www.buzzon.com**.

Outdoor libations are on tap at **Victoria Row** ★, a section of Richmond Street behind the Confederation Centre that is blocked off to auto traffic each summer. Restaurants and pubs cluster here, serving meals and drinks on outdoor or street-side patios; things get fun and lively, and there's usually live music. Two locally favorite spots here are **Café Diem** (✆ **902/892-0494**) at 128 Richmond St. and **Fishbones** (✆ **902/628-6569**), an oyster bar and seafood grill with good live music at 136 Richmond St.

Last time I checked, the **Gahan House Pub** ★ (✆ **902/626-2337**) at 126 Sydney St. was the only microbrewery on PEI. They serve a pubby menu of fish and chips (cooked in a bag), curries, burgers, pizzas, and chicken, handled pretty well by the kitchen. But that's not the reason most locals end up here. They come to sample one of the house-brewed ales (six at last count) and stout. There are also tours of the brewery, twice a day (except Sunday), in July and August.

For live Celtic-flavored music and occasional lobster and roast-beef dinners, head for the **Olde Dublin Pub,** above the Claddagh Oyster House (see above) at 131 Sydney St. (✆ **902/892-6992**).

For high culture, always check first with the **Confederation Centre of the Arts Gallery and Museum** (✆ **800/565-0278** or 902/628-1864), where three stages bustle with dramatic and musical activity throughout the warm-weather months. The musical *Anne of Green Gables,* a perennial favorite, is performed here throughout the summer—but so are revivals and new shows, including a version of Riverdance and a tribute to the late Canadian folk singer Stan Rogers.

Finally, the art-house **City Cinema** ★, at 64 King St. (✆ **902/368-3669**), has an excellent lineup of domestic and foreign films throughout the year; typically, there's a choice of two films each evening. Movie tickets cost C$8 per adult, C$5.50 for seniors and kids 14 and under.

6 KINGS COUNTY

After a visit to Charlottetown and the island's central towns, Kings County comes as a bit of a surprise. It's far more tranquil and uncluttered than Queens County, and the landscapes feature woodlots alternating with corn, grain, and potato fields. Although locals play up this county's two largest commercial centers—**Souris** and **Montague**—it's good to keep in mind that each of these coastal hamlets has a population of less than 2,000. So don't arrive here expecting attractions to amuse and entertain you; you'll have to do that yourself.

Fortunately, this is prime cycling territory, and walks on the empty beaches are another good tonic for life. Long drives in the country, with occasional stops for eats or to snap photos, are usually the order of the day.

Note that if you're heading to Kings County from Charlottetown, you'll pass right through **Orwell** and its historic sites en route. It's a worthwhile stop. For more information on Orwell, see the village's listings earlier in this chapter in the "Queens County" section.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Several of the island's main roads, including Highways 1, 2, 3, and 4, connect Kings County with Charlottetown and the western flank of the island. So it's easy to get here; get out a map, plot a cool route, and point your car north and west. If you're coming from Nova Scotia, the **Woods Island** ferry docks up on the southern coast, though fewer and fewer travelers seem to take that route anymore. See "Exploring Prince Edward Island," earlier in this chapter, for more information about the ferry.

VISITOR INFORMATION There's a provincial **Visitor Information Centre** at 95 Main St. in **Souris** (which is also Route 2; ✆ **902/687-7030**), open daily from mid-June through mid-October. There's another VIC at the head of pretty **St. Peters Bay,** on Route 2 at the intersection of routes 313 and 16 (✆ **902/961-3540**); this info center, which borders the lovely Confederation Trail, opens daily June through October.

MURRAY RIVER & MURRAY HARBOUR ★

It's not too hard to guess the name of the family that originally settled this area—it seems that "Murray" is appended to practically every landmark of note. These two small and

tidy villages offer little in the way of drama but lots of repose: the sounds of crickets, wind in the trees, and water; the soothing sights of red cliffs of sand, little boats returning to harbor, and seals.

As you drive, watch for the tight lines of buoys in the coastal waterways: The island's famous blue mussels are cultivated in the rivers here in mesh bags suspended underwater from ropes attached to those buoys, then shipped out to fine kitchens worldwide when they've grown to proper eating size.

Exploring the Murrays

Murray River has several natural attractions beyond the views. One short **interpretive trail,** about half a kilometer (a mile) long, skirts the local golf course; another trail takes you through a grove of tall, ancient pine trees on the east side of McLure's Pond.

But the town is probably more famous for its local harbor seals, which are more common than cows in this part of PEI—if you know where on the river to look. The best way to view the sleek creatures is from the water. Visit the island's largest **seal colony** ★★ by booking a trip with **Marine Adventures Seal Watching** ★ (✆ **800/496-2494** or 902/962-2494; www.sealwatching.com) in Murray River. You'll travel in enclosed boats (rain or shine) and see seals, mussel farms, herons, and, with luck, bald eagles. The tours are offered three times daily from June through the end of August; the cost is C$21 adults, C$18 students and seniors, C$12 children age 12 and under. Allow at least 2 hours for the entire trip.

Young children often enjoy corny **Kings Castle Provincial Park** (✆ **902/962-7422**), an old-fashioned kiddy park of the sort that was popular in the 1950s and 1960s. This pleasant spot on the shores of the Murray River (with swimming at a small beach) features life-sized depictions of storybook characters scattered about the fields and woodlands. Kids can visit and be photographed with the likes of Goldilocks and the Three Little Pigs, then play on an array of playground equipment or eat ice cream at the park's canteen. It's open daily from 9am to 9pm from June through mid-September; best of all, admission is free. The park is on Route 348, about 3km (2 miles) east of the town of Murray River on the south bank of the river.

A couple of beaches are also well worth visiting if you're in the area. A short drive from Murray River along the north bank of the river (take Route 17) is remote, empty **Poverty Point Beach.** Dunes back this long strand of eastward-facing beach. You park at the end of the road and walk along the beach watching for bird life. Swimming is problematic, though; the beach is pebbly at low tide, and currents can be troublesome. But it's certainly quiet: You might not see another soul, even in summer, on the entire strand. It's free.

Even better is the quiet strand at **Beach Point** ★, on the south side of the river; take Route 18 east (also known locally as Cape Bear Rd.) from Murray Harbour. It's only about 3km (2 miles) to the beach, which is almost never crowded and is especially good for families with kids. When the tide's out, there's room to roam and tide pools aplenty.

Explore the blocky **Cape Bear Lighthouse** ★ while you're at Beach Point. Built in 1881 on a (crumbling) cliff, it was one of Marconi's wireless stations—and the one where an operator first heard the *Titanic*'s desperate SOS calls. The lighthouse was later used to track German U-boats during World War II. A small seasonal **museum** ★ (✆ **902/962-2917**) documents the station, which is no longer here, and it includes audio from Thomas Bartlett, the man who received the *Titanic* call. You can also climb about 40 steps to get a great view of the red-sand beaches and cliffs of the point. Admission costs C$3.50 for adults, C$2.50 for seniors, C$1.50 for children, and C$7.50 for families.

A few miles north past Poverty Beach (and also free of charge) is **Panmure Island** ★ and its **provincial park** ★, which is open from early June through the middle of September. This island is connected to the mainland via a sand-dune isthmus; the contrast between the white sands (on the ocean side) and the red beach of the inner cove is striking. It's a lovely spot, with swimming on the ocean side (lifeguards in summer); bathrooms and changing rooms; a viewing tower; and views northward to a striking little **lighthouse** ★. There are also kids' programs at the park during peak summer months.

There's also a 9-hole golf course, shopping area, and some small tour outfitters to occupy you in the **Murrays**. And if you're here at the end of July, don't miss the **Murray River Fisheries Festival** ★, a very local celebration involving dory-rowing competitions, log-rolling, a parade, and food and drink.

Where to Stay

It's nice to be able to camp within sight of a white-sand beach, and you can do just that in **Panmure Island Provincial Park** ★ (✆ **902/838-0668**). There are 43 sites here, some with hookups, some nicely sited in grassy fields with water views. Cost is from C$23 to C$27 per night. They accept credit cards. The campground, like the park, is open from early June through the middle of September.

Forest and Stream Cottages ★ These cottages, run by a friendly local couple, are located on 8 hectares (20 acres) of peaceful woodlands near a lake and the site of an old grist mill. The grounds are shady, lovely, and laced with nature trails; you can also swim in the lake or use the property's rowboats, canoes, and pedal boats. The six cottages themselves are fairly bland- and dated-looking, with kitchenettes and linoleum flooring, but they also have satellite TVs, DVD players, screened-in porches, picnic tables, and gas grills. The owners rent out bikes at pretty good rates if you need one. The same couple also maintain four spare but nice B&B rooms upstairs in their main house for about C$110 per night; these come with full breakfasts (the cottages don't), phones with free long-distance calling, and access to a hot tub in the property's gazebo.

446 Fox River Rd. (off Rte. 18), Murray Harbour, PEI C0A 1V0. ✆ **800/227-9943** or 902/962-3537. Fax 902/962-2130. www.forestandstreamcottages.com. 6 cottages. Cottage (double occupancy) C$75–C$125 nightly, C$475–C$790 weekly. Packages available. MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. Small pets allowed. **Amenities:** Bike rentals; hot tub. *In room:* TV/DVD (cottages only), kitchenette (cottages only), no phone (cottages only).

Fox River Cottages ★ These four modern two-bedroom cottages with kitchenettes are beautifully situated on 5 hectares (13 acres) down a winding dirt road at the edge of a field overlooking the islands of Murray Bay. The cottages are tidy units of exposed wood and high cathedral ceilings, furnished with televisions and DVD players, and all with views of the bay. They're near one another, yet also staggered to create a sense of personal privacy. Two units have woodstoves; all of them are heated with electric heat and have decks, Wi-Fi access, and gas barbecues for evening grilling. Relax on your cottage's screened porch, then wander down to the river and dabble around on a thousand-foot beach (swimming and good clam digging) or in one of the property's canoes (remember your life jacket). One unit has a private washer and dryer and its own dishwasher, but there's also a laundry on premises that all guests can use for free.

239 Machon Point Rd. (off Rte. 18 on the north side of the river), Murray Harbour, PEI C0A 1V0. ✆ **902/962-2881.** www.foxriver.ca. 4 units. Cottages (double occupancy) peak season C$120–C$140 nightly, C$500–C$925 weekly; spring and fall, C$80–C$95 nightly, C$500–C$600 weekly. V, MC. Closed Nov–May. **Amenities:** Canoes. *In room:* TV/DVD, kitchenette, no phone.

MONTAGUE

Montague may be the Kings County region's main commercial hub, but it's a hub in pretty low gear: compact and attractive, with a handsome business district on a pair of flanking hills sloping down to a bridge across the Montague River. (In fact, a century and a half ago, the town was called Montague Bridge.) Shipbuilding was the economic mainstay in the 19th century; today, though, dairy and (surprise) tobacco farming are the main local endeavors.

Exploring the Outdoors

Cruise Manada ★ (✆ **800/986-3444** or 902/838-3444; www.cruisemanada.com) offers good seal- and bird-watching tours daily during peak season aboard restored fishing boats that protect passengers from the weather; the cost is C$22 adults, C$20 seniors and students, C$12 children ages 5 to 13. Trips depart from the marina on the Montague River (it's just below the visitor center, in the old railway depot) once to three times daily in July and August, once daily from mid-May through the end of June and throughout September. Reservations are advised; allow at least 2 hours for the trip. This outfit also does little "floating *ceilidhs*" (a fiddler, guitarist, and food on the boat) twice a week in the summer months for C$40 per adult, C$23 per child age 5 to 13.

Southeast of Montague (en route to Murray River) is **Buffaloland Provincial Park** ★ (✆ **902/652-8950**), home to a small herd of buffalo. These magnificent animals were a gift to PEI from the province of Alberta, and they now number about two dozen. Walk down the fenced-in corridor into the paddock and ascend the wooden platform for the best view of these gentle, shaggy beasts. Often they're hunkered down at the far end of the meadow, but they sometimes wander closer to your vantage point. The park is right off Route 4, about 6km (4 miles) outside town; watch for signs. Like so many PEI parks, it's free.

A bit north of Buffaloland on Route 4, between routes 216 and 317, is the **Harvey Moore Wildlife Management Area** ★, a delightful place for a stroll. A privately owned park named for the local naturalist who created this sanctuary in 1949, its centerpiece is a 45-minute trail that loops around a pond and through varied ecosystems. Watch especially for waterfowl (with which Moore had an unusually close rapport) such as black ducks, blue-winged teal, ring-necked ducks, pintails, and plenty of Canada geese. It's open during daylight hours June to mid-September. Once again, admission is free.

Brudenell River Provincial Park ★ is one of the province's best parks and is a great spot to work up an athletic glow on a sunny afternoon. You'll find two well-regarded golf courses, a golf academy, a full-blown resort (see "Where to Stay," below), tennis, lawn bowling, a wildflower garden, a playground, a campground, and nature trails. Kids' programs—which might include Frisbee golf, shoreline scavenger hunts, and crafts workshops—are scheduled daily in summer. You can also rent canoes, kayaks, and jet skis from private operators within the park. The park is open daily from mid-May through early October, and is free to enter. Head north of Montague on Route 4, then east on Route 3 to the park signs.

Where to Stay

In addition to the park's own resort, described below, **Brudenell River Provincial Park** ★ (✆ **902/652-8966**) also maintains a large campground of 95 sites with various levels of services and amenities. Rates range from C$23 to C$30 per night. The park is open from mid-May through early October.

Rodd Brudenell River Resort ★★ (Kids) The seasonal (open May through October), attractive Brudenell River Resort was built in 1991, and its open, vaguely Frank Lloyd Wright–influenced design reflects this recent vintage. This is an especially popular destination for golfers. Guests choose from among three types of lodgings. The hotel proper has about 100 well-appointed guest rooms and suites, most with a balcony or terrace looking out onto either the river or one of the resort's showpiece **golf courses ★★**. The expensive, modern "gold cottages" each have two bedrooms, a Jacuzzi, a wet bar, cathedral ceilings, kitchens with dishwashers, fireplaces, decks, barbecue sets, and big-screen TVs; they can also be split in half, so you might share a cottage with another set of guests, but the halves are fully divided. Basic "country cabins" lower down by the river are budget-friendly but aging, and cluster oddly like pavilions in some long-gone world exposition. The cabins all have double beds, and only about one-third have kitchenettes. (Also, complaints about mold in these cabins persist.) In addition to the excellent golf courses—one with a respected golf academy that offers lessons—the resort has indoor and outdoor pools and a spa. The main dining room, on the first level of the property, is a huge place (high-backed chairs try to establish a sense of intimacy) but there's a bistro and pool bar here, as well.

Rte. 3 (P.O. Box 67), Cardigan, PEI C0A 1G0. ✆ **800/565-7633** or 902/652-2332. Fax 902/652-2886. www.rodd-hotels.ca. 181 units. C$139–C$260 double, C$90–C$183 cabin, C$167–C$568 suite and cottage. Packages available. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to early May. Pets allowed (C$10 per pet per night). **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar; babysitting; canoe/kayak/bike rentals; children's center; 3 golf courses; golf school; fitness center; Jacuzzi; indoor and outdoor pools; sauna; spa; 2 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units), hair dryer, kitchenette (some units), minibar (some units).

Where to Dine

Windows on the Water Café ★★ SEAFOOD If you haven't yet dined on those internationally famous PEI mussels yet, this enjoyable seasonal cafe is the place to do it. The blue mussels are steamed in a *mirepoix* (French vegetable soup stock) adulterated with flavors of sesame, ginger, and garlic—a tasty take. Dinnertime main courses here could include sole stuffed with crab; fish burgers; or peppered steak served with sautéed vegetables. Lunches are lighter, but still great—chicken salads, house-made maritime fish cakes, and the like. For dessert, the bread pudding is highly recommended. If the weather's good, ask for a seat on the (covered) deck and enjoy a great view of the Montague River; if not, that's okay, because the open dining room is lively enough on its own.

106 Sackville St. (corner of Main St.), Montague. ✆ **902/838-2080.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$7–C$10 at lunch, C$15–C$21 at dinner. AE, DC, MC, V. June–Sept daily 11:30am–9:30pm. Closed Oct–May.

SOURIS & NORTHEAST PEI ★★

Some 40km (25 miles) northeast of Montague—take Route 4 north out of town, merge with Route 2, and keep going east—is the little town of **Souris,** an active fishing town attractively set on a gentle hill overlooking its harbor. Yet things weren't always so great here. Souris (pronounced soo-*ree*) is actually French for "mice"—not too flattering, is it? And, in fact, the town owes its name to its frustrated early settlers, who were beset by waves of voracious field mice that repeatedly destroyed their food crops. Finally they named the place "Mouse-town" and concentrated on the fishing, which worked out rather better. But "Mouse-town" it remains today, though the mice are (mostly) gone.

In addition to its own little charms, this town is the launching base for ferry boats to the **Magdalen Islands** (which are actually part of Québec; see box on p. 257 for ferry details).

It also makes a good central base for exploring northeastern PEI, which is considered by Charlottetown types to be the island's version of the Outback or Maine's North Woods—a place that's remote, barely populated, and (in this case) more greenly forested than the rest of PEI, which has mostly mortgaged its trees for plowed fields. Since a spur of the **Confederation Trail** ends in Souris, this is a good spot from which to launch a bike excursion of the area. You can ride to the main trunk trail, then turn northeast and continue to land's end at the East Point Lighthouse (see "Exploring the Area," below).

Exploring the Area

Several good beaches can be found ringing this wedge-shaped peninsula that points like an accusing finger toward Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island. **Red Point Provincial Park** (✆ **902/357-3075**) lies about 13km (8 miles) northeast of Souris, on Route 16. Open from June through mid-September, it offers a handsome beach and supervised swimming, along with a **campground** that's popular with families (see "Where to Stay," below).

Just a little farther along Route 16 there's another inviting (and often empty) beach at **Basin Head,** which features a **"singing sands" beach** ★ that allegedly sings (actually, it more like squeaks) when you walk on it. The dunes here are especially nice. Look also for the nearby **Basin Head Fisheries Museum** ★ (✆ **902/357-7233**), a provincially operated museum that offers insight into the life of the inshore fisherman. Admission is C$4 adults, C$3.50 students, and C$12 families (free for children under 12). It's open daily 9am to 5pm, then closed from mid-September through May.

At the island's far eastern tip is the aptly named **East Point Lighthouse** ★ (✆ **902/357-2106**). You can simply enjoy the dramatic setting or take a tour of the building from mid-June through early September. Ask for your East Point ribbon while you're here; if you also made it to the North Cape Lighthouse on PEI's western shore, you'll receive a Traveler's Award documenting you've traveled the island tip-to-tip. Admission to the octagonal lighthouse tower is C$3 adults, C$2 seniors and students, C$1 children, and C$8 families. There's also a craft shop on-site purveying jewelry, soap, sand paintings, local books and music, and other island goods.

Where to Stay

There's also camping at **Red Point Provincial Park** (✆ **902/357-3075**). There are about 120 sites here, costing from C$23 to C$30, most of them built to handle the annual summer influx of RVs. They take reservations beginning in April, and accept credit cards; there are kids' programs throughout July and August.

Inn at Bay Fortune ★★ This lovely brick-and-shingle compound on 18 hectares (45 acres) of bayside grounds in the hamlet of Bay Fortune was built by playwright Elmer Harris in 1910 as a summer home, and it quickly became the nucleus for a colony of artists, actors, and writers. Current innkeeper David Wilmer bought it from an actress in the 1980s, then renovated thoroughly—about half the units have fireplaces, and some have Jacuzzis—though it still retains solid furniture, old-home angles and quirks, and an absence of phones, TVs, or air-conditioning units. He also added a six-room wing of more luxurious rooms, including the wonderful bi-level North Tower room no. 4 with its high ceiling, propane fireplace, and balcony overlooking the lodge and bay; the view is simply awesome. There's also a Jacuzzi. The best view, though, might be from South Tower room no. 4, up a narrow staircase—it feels like another planet once you reach this perchlike unit. Towers all booked up? The Green Room has a cool little rooftop deck with bay views, patio furniture, and an umbrella. Newer rooms here are bigger than the

older ones, yet all are cozy with mixes of antiques and custom-made furniture. Wilmer has done a good job. This is also home to one of PEI's best **restaurants** ★★, open to the public (see "Where to Dine," below).

758 Rte. 310 (turn south off Rte. 2 about 5 miles west of Souris), Bay Fortune, PEI C0A 2B0. ✆ **902/687-3745**. Fax 902/687-3540. www.innatbayfortune.com. 17 units. C$135–C$150 double, C$200-C$335; suite off-season discounts available. Rates include full breakfast. Packages available. DC, MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* Fireplace (some units), Jacuzzi (some units), no phone.

Inn at Spry Point ★★ Finds This rambling house was built in the 1970s on a remote point of land as a United Nations–funded, self-sufficient community affiliated with the New Alchemy Institute—think windmills, solar power, greenhouses, trout ponds, hippy-dippy talk. But oil prices dropped, interest in conservation waned, and the experiment faded. Enter David Wilmer, owner of the successful Inn at Bay Fortune (see above). He bought the 32-hectare (80-acre) property and brought it up to date (no small task). All 15 units have king-sized beds and most are tastefully, airily appointed with comfortable sitting areas (11 of them are considered suites). They're rather minimalist in effect, with white wood walls and beams, white bed covers, simple flooring, wooden dressers, and French chairs. Most have private balconies, and several have a little garden terrace as well; suite no. 6 has a deep whirlpool soaker tub and shower from which you can see the grounds. Beyond the grounds, there's a little more than 2km (a mile and a half) of undeveloped shorefront for exploration, and you can also walk trails traversing red-clay cliffs with views of the Northumberland Strait. Later, dine in the outstanding contemporary **dining room** ★★, whose chef features locally grown organic vegetables and island seafood.

Spry Pt. Rd. (turn off from Rte. 310 about 6 miles south of Rte. 2), Little Pond, PEI COA 2B0. ✆ **888/687-3745** or 902/583-2400. Fax 902/583-2176. www.innatsprypoint.com. 15 units. C$159–C$299 double. Rates include full breakfast. Packages available. DC, MC, V. Closed mid-Sept to late June. **Amenities:** Restaurant room service. *In room:* A/C.

Matthew House Inn ★ Kimberly and Franco Olivieri came to PEI on vacation from Italy in 1995 and fell in love with the island's grand old homes. Before their trip was over, they found themselves impulsively buying one of them—this one, now a fine B&B just a block off Main Street in the heart of "downtown" Souris. Topping a pleasant lawn overlooking the harbor and the Magdalen Island ferry, the stately Victorian mansion dates from 1885 and maintains many of its original flourishes inside and out. Eastlake-style furnishings and William Morris touches give the place an architectural richness. This is definitely a place best appreciated by those passionate about old homes. (Those seeking modernist, clean designs and cool electronic gadgets should try elsewhere.) Rooms are spare, straightforward affairs of flowery linen, odd angles, and simple wooden furniture. It's somewhat surprising that all units are outfitted with TVs and VCRs, but they are. Rates include light or full breakfasts.

15 Breakwater St. (P.O. Box 151), Souris, PEI C0A 2B0. ✆ **902/687-3461.** Fax 902/687-3461. www.matthewhouseinn.com. 8 units. C$105–C$170 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, MC, V. Closed early Sept to mid-June. Children over 10 welcome. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* TV/VCR, hair dryer, no phone.

Where to Dine

Inn at Bay Fortune ★★★ CONTEMPORARY To fully appreciate a meal at the Inn at Bay Fortune, arrive early and wander through the gardens behind the inn. The herbs and edible flowers are a short walk from the kitchen; a little farther beyond is the big vegetable garden. These are a good introduction to the local products (including

An Excursion to the Magdalen Islands

The **Magdalen Islands (Les Isles de la Madeleine),** a 5-hour ferry ride north of PEI, are a dozen low-lying islands linked to each another by sand spits. Around 13,000 people live here, in peaceful fishing villages and farming communities; the red-sand cliffs look like PEI, but the farmhouses, wharves, cows, boats, and accents remind me of the Atlantic coast of France. (The Magdalens are actually part of Québec, even though they're closer to PEI.) The islands boast nearly 320km (200 miles) of uncrowded beaches, and urban Montréalers in search of leisure time love the place. The islands are also famous for their persistent winds, which seemingly never cease blowing.

Advance planning is necessary for a trip to the islands, since the summertime demand for accommodations far outstrips supply. A free island tourist guide is available by calling ✆ **877/624-4437** or 418/986-2245. On the web, head to **www.tourismeilesdelamadeleine.com**.

Ferry service from Souris to Cap-aux-Meules is provided by the **Coopérative de Transport Maritime** (✆ **888/986-3278** or 418/986-3278; www.ctma.ca), also known as the CTMA. The long river crossing takes 5 hours one-way on a seven-deck ferry that can carry 95 cars and 400 passengers. The boats sail as many as 11 times weekly in summer; the schedule is reduced to as few as three weekly boats in the off season, so check a schedule online before arriving on PEI.

One-way rates during high season (mid-June to mid-September) are C$45 per adult, C$37 per senior, and C$23 per child age 5 to 12, plus C$84 for a normal-sized automobile (more for vans and campers). ***Tip:*** Those rates plunge by about 50% outside of the 3 peak months.

some from these gardens) on the menu of this, one of eastern Canada's very best restaurants. Chef Warren Barr worked with original inn chef Michael Smith to develop the eatery's cuisine, philosophy, and vaunted openness—how many restaurants feature a KITCHEN WELCOME sign inviting diners to stop in for a visit? Today the place is wildly successful, with an always-changing menu that rarely fails to produce a great meal; Barr really goes the extra mile to dazzle. You might find starters and entrees like a chicken-liver crème brûlée filled with pistachios and dried apricots; scallop tartare served with a strawberry balsamic salsa; fish cakes with a lobster rémoulade; smoked duck; grilled lobster with a lobster emulsion; crisped local beef short ribs; or herb-encrusted local cod with a cut of Nova Scotia smoked fish; salmon paired with prawns, with an asparagus velouté. Or it could be something else again. For those with a *very* serious interest in cooking, ask about the coveted **chef's table** ★★ (a glass-enclosed booth within the kitchen, in which dinner is served just once nightly in seven to ten courses). Can't quite float that? Ask about a tasting menu. There's an exceptionally well-chosen, award-winning wine list here, as well.

758 Rte. 310 (turn south off Rte. 2 about 8km/5 miles west of Souris), Baie Fortune, PEI C0A 2B0. ✆ **902/687-3745.** Reservations strongly recommended. Main courses typically C$25–C$35; tasting and chef's table menus C$70-C$100 per person. AE, MC, V. Daily 5–9pm. Closed mid-Oct to late May.

ST. PETERS BAY & ENVIRONS

The easternmost sector of Kings County attracts few tourists—other than those speeding through en route to East Point with the goal of a tip-to-tip car crossing of the island.

Yet it's worth slowing down to see this region—the pastoral landscapes are sublime, and the best vistas are found off the paved roads. It's also an area blessed with a number of appealing bike routes and what might be the island's top golf course. While it has few prominent natural landmarks, **St. Peters Bay** ★, a narrow and attractive inlet that twists eastward from the coast, is a worthy exception—one of my favorite little bodies of water on the island, for some reason. This is also the real PEI: full-service filling stations that look like they could be straight out of the Midwestern U.S. in the 1950s; farmers cycling and fishing from bridges; bold purple lupines far outnumbering cows, cars, and people.

Restless travelers with attention-deficit disorder might not enjoy this region as much as I do, but for the rest of us, a bit of rambling around here isn't a bad way at all to spend a day.

Exploring the Area

Follow Route 313 along the north shore of St. Peter's Bay to its tip and you'll come to the **Greenwich Dunes** ★, a stunning area of uniquely wind-carved migrating sand dunes capped with grasses. This region was slated for vacation-home development until 1997, when it was acquired (and thus saved) by Parks Canada, which added it as an extension to Prince Edward Island National Park. Thank goodness for that.

The cute little town of **Mount Stewart** (on Rte. 2, just over the county line in Queens County) is located near the confluence of several spurs of the **Confederation Trail,** the excellent island-wide recreation trail which I have described earlier (see "The Great Outdoors," p. 222). The Mount Stewart area is home to some of the best-maintained eastern segments of this trail.

The trail's popularity and potential didn't pass unnoticed by a father-and-son team, who opened a bike-rental operation, hotel, and cafe: **Trailside Inn, Café & Adventures** ★ (✆ **888/704-6595** or 902/676-3130; www.trailside.ca) on Mount Stewart's Main Street (Route 22). They now rent a big fleet of mountain bikes at inflation-proof rates of C$15 per half-day or C$20 per full day, helmets included. The staff is extremely helpful with suggestions, maps, and directions, and can arrange for a van shuttle to pick you up at your destination if you'd prefer a one-way trip. (The ride northeast to **East Point,** for example, is about 64km/40 miles one-way, along the bay and over several low train trestles retrofitted for bikes.)

For a review of the inn and cafe, see "Where to Stay & Dine," below).

Greenwich Interpretation Centre ★ An annex to the island's national park, this interpretive center (open seasonally) offers a deeper explanation of the unique dune formations adjacent to St. Peters Bay. In addition to programs and displays, there are guided tours for individuals and groups. You can also take a cool break by making use of the beach, where supervised swimming is allowed from late June to the end of August. There are also bathrooms, changing facilities, showers, and an observation tower here. A visit here is worth a half-hour of your time to get oriented before plunging into the park. (Remember that entry to the dunes means entering the national park, which carries a summertime admission fee of C$7.80 per adult, C$6.80 per senior, and C$2.90 per child. All these rates are slashed by 50% during spring and fall.)

Rte. 313, Greenwich (from St. Peters Bay, cross the bridge to the north side and drive a few miles west on Rte. 313), P rince Edward Island National P ark. ✆ **902/961-2514.** July–Aug daily 10am–6pm; June and Sept daily 10am–5pm. Closed Oct–May.

Finds Golfing Along the Gulf

Hidden away on this quiet part of the island are the **Links at Crowbush Cove** ★★★ (✆ **800/235-8909** or 902/368-5761), considered by many to be PEI's best golf course for both its lovely aesthetics and its sturdy challenge. (The course has previously captured five stars from no less an authority than *Golf Digest*.) The 6,900-yard, par-72 course was built in 1994 along the Gulf of St. La wrence; so, yes, it's truly links-style golf in the best Scottish tradition. There are 9 water holes here, plus 8 that run alongside dunes—and a goodly helping of those dreaded "pot bunkers." The 11th tee tends to become a bottleneck, as golfers are momentarily distracted by sweeping views up and down the island's coast. Reserved tee times are available for C$79 to C$99 per round; rates include unlimited golf, pull carts, tees, and buckets of practice-range balls. Kids play free after 3pm every day. The course is located just west of the village of Morell; going toward or coming from Morell, take Route 2 to the Route 350 turnoff, turn, and continue driving 3 to 5km (2 or 3 miles) on it until y ou reach the course.

Where to Stay & Dine

Rodd Crowbush Golf & Beach Resort ★★★ The Rodd's Kings County property is impressive, anchored by access to what's possibly the island's best golf course (see "Golfing Along the Gulf" box, above) and a nearby beach. The range of accommodations here includes 25 rooms, 24 king-bedded suites (some with balconies on the bay and golf course), and 32 colorful one- and two-bedroom cottages with luxe touches like Jacuzzis, dishwashers, porches, grills, multiple televisions, and kitchenettes. Of course there's free Wi-Fi throughout, a fitness center, an indoor pool, an outdoor hot tub, and tennis courts, as well. The hotel's dining room (serving three meals daily) is complemented by an adjacent lounge and the clubhouse grill at the golf course.

632 Rte. 350 (P.O. Box 350), Morell, PEI C0A 1S0. ✆ **800/565-7633** or 902/961-5600. Fax 902/561-5601. www.roddvacations.com. 81 units. C$151–C$656 double. Packages available. MC, V. Closed late Sept to mid-June. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; golf course; fitness center; Jacuzzi; indoor pool, spa; 2 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV/DVD, hair dryer.

Trailside Inn, Café & Adventures ★ Value The Trailside Inn is housed in a former grocery store converted into an inn, cafe, and outdoor adventure center (see "Exploring the Area," above, for more info on the bike rentals). There's nothing fancy here, but the four simple rooms (each with a private bathroom) are comfortably furnished in funky-bright bedspreads, and have nice unexpected touches like telephones, televisions, radiant heat under the hardwood floors, Jacuzzis or cast-iron tubs, and air-conditioning (in two of the four units). The clientele consists primarily of bicyclists, who come here for proximity to the Confederation Trail, which runs right by the property. There's plenty of live local music in the informal cafe on the ground floor, which is open Friday through Sunday for dinner plus anytime there's a live performance. The menu's basic but homemade and good: soups, chowders, a smoked-salmon plate, salmon, scallops, a house chicken dish, and some rather sweet desserts including an ice cream-filled crepe.

109 Main St., Mount Stewart, PEI C0A 1T0. ✆ **888/704-6595** or 902/676-3130. www.trailside.ca. 4 units. C$80 double. MC, V. Closed late Sept to mid-June. **Amenities:** Restaurant, bike r entals. *In room:* A/C (in some units), TV, Jacuzzi (in some units).

7 PRINCE COUNTY

Prince County encompasses the western end of PEI, and offers a mixture of lush agricultural landscapes, rugged coastline, and unpopulated sandy beaches. Generally speaking, this region is more ragged around the edges (in a working-farm, working-waterfront kind of way) than prettier, more polished and postcard-friendly places on the island in Kings and Queens counties. In other words: Real people live and work here. Respect them.

Within this unrefined landscape, however, you can find pockets of charm such as the village of **Victoria** on the south coast (at the county line) and in **Tyne Valley** near the north coast, which is vaguely reminiscent of a Cotswold hamlet.

In addition, the **Confederation Trail** (described in "The Great Outdoors," p. 222) offers quiet access to the rolling countryside throughout much of northwestern Prince County. As well, several provincial parks here rank among the best on the island.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Route 2 is the main highway connecting Prince County with the rest of the island; almost all of the smaller feeder routes in these parts eventually lead you to or from Route 2.

VISITOR INFORMATION The best source of travel information for the county is **Gateway Village** (✆ **902/437-8570**) at the end of the Confederation Bridge, described in the introduction to this chapter (see "Essentials," p. 219). It's open daily, year-round.

VICTORIA ★★

The town of **Victoria**—located a short detour off Route 1 between the Confederation Bridge and Charlottetown—is a tiny, scenic village that has attracted a clutch of artists, boutique owners, and craftspeople. What there is of the village is perfect for strolling—parking is near the wharf and off the streets, keeping the narrow lanes free for foot traffic.

Wander these short, shady streets while admiring the architecture, much of which is in an elemental, farmhouse style in clapboard or shingles and constructed with sharply creased gables. (Some elaborate Victorian homes break with that pattern, however.) What makes the place so singular is that the village, which was first settled in 1767, has utterly escaped the creeping sprawl that has plagued so many otherwise attractive places on-island. The entire village consists of a grand total of four square blocks, surrounded by potato fields and the Northumberland Strait. I'm pretty sure the village looked almost exactly the same (except for the cars puttering through) a century or more ago.

Exploring Victoria

The **Victoria Seaport Lighthouse Museum** (no phone) is located inside the shingled, square **lighthouse** ★ near the town parking lot. (You can't miss it.) You'll find a rustic local history museum with the usual assortment of artifacts from the past century or so. It's open daily in summer; admission is by donation.

In the middle of town is the cute, well-regarded **Victoria Playhouse** ★ (✆ **902/658-2025**). Built in 1913 as a community hall, the building has a unique raked stage (it drops 17cm/7 inches over 6m/21 ft. to create the illusion of space), four beautiful stained-glass lamps, and a proscenium arch—pretty unusual for a community hall. Plays staged here from July through mid-September attract folks out from Charlottetown for the night. It's hard to say which is more fun: the quality of the performances or the big-night-out air of a professional play being staged in a small town with absolutely nothing else going on.

There's also a Monday-night concert series, with performers offering up everything from traditional folk to Latin jazz. Most tickets are C$26 adults, C$24 seniors, and C$20 students, though a few performances are priced higher; matinees cost about C$18.

Among the two dozen or so businesses in the village, the most intriguing is **Island Chocolates** (✆ **902/658-2320**), where delicious Belgian-style chocolates are made. The shop is open daily from mid-June through mid-September (they do two workshops a week on chocolate making, for C$35 per person).

With a little hunting, you can also find a quilt maker, a candle maker, a used-book store, art galleries, a small **provincial park** ★, and an antiques shop here. But that's about it.

Where to Stay

Orient Hotel Value ★ The Orient has been a Victoria mainstay for years—a 1926 guide says the inn offered rooms for C$2.50 per night. (Of course, back then a trip to the bathroom required a walk to the carriage house.) The place has since been modernized, and all rooms now have private bathrooms, but the hotel still retains much of its original charm and quirkiness, too. The century-old building with bright yellow shingles and maroon trim is at the edge of the village, overlooking fields that turn purple in late summer. Rooms are painted in warm pastel tones and furnished in flea-market antiques; most have good water views, and all have phones, ceiling fans, and televisions. The place has a friendly, low-key demeanor much like that of the village itself, and the owners have also added a combination television-and-games room for playing cribbage, crokinole (an old-fashioned Maritime game), and *ceilidhs* (Celtic folk dances). **Mrs. Proffit's Tea Room,** on the first floor, serves light lunches (sandwiches, lobster rolls, soup, salad) plus an afternoon tea featuring good scones.

34 Main St. (P.O. Box 55), Victoria, PEI C0A 2G0. ✆ **800/565-6743** or 902/658-2503. 8 units. C$80–C$150 double and suite. Rates include full breakfast. Packages available. MC, V. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May. Not suitable for children under 12. **Amenities:** Tea room. *In room:* TV.

Where to Dine

Landmark Café ★ Finds CAFE Located right across from the Victoria Playhouse (see "Exploring Victoria," above), the popular Landmark Café occupies a small green building that was once this town's general store and post office. Today it does still peddle something—the pots and jars hung up on the walls—but the food is now squarely the main focus here, not the crockery. The cafe's menu, while limited, is inviting, served in a funky, slightly bohemian setting that keeps the same summer people and locals coming back, year after year. Daily offerings usually include sandwiches and lobster rolls for lunch, and such things as steamed mussels, salads, lasagna, meat pie, salmon, and good filet mignon for dinner. Yes, there's a wine list.

12 Main St. ✆ **902/658-2286.** Reservations recommended. Sandwiches around C$6; main courses C$11–C$16. MC, V. Daily 11:30am–9:30pm. Closed mid-Sept to late June.

TYNE VALLEY ★

The village of **Tyne Valley,** just off Malpeque Bay, is one of the most attractive and pastoral areas in all of western PEI. It's also exceptionally tiny, even for this island: population 220 on a good day.

You'll quickly discover that there's little to do here, yet much to admire: verdant barley and potato fields surrounding a village of gingerbread-like homes, plus azure inlets nosing in on the view from the long distance. (Those inlets are the arms of the bay, world-famous

 for its succulent oysters.) A former 19th-century shipbuilding center, Tyne Valley now attracts artisans and others in search of the slow lane; the gorgeous scenery is a bonus. A handful of good restaurants, inns, and shops here cater to summer travelers.

Exploring Tyne Valley

Just north of the village on Route 12 is lovely **Green Park Provincial Park** ★★ (✆ **902/831-7912**), open from mid-June through early September. Once the site of an active shipyard, this 80-hectare (200-acre) park is now a lush riverside destination with emerald lawns and leafy trees. It still has the feel of a turn-of-the-20th-century estate—which, in fact, it was. In the heart of the park is the extravagant 1865 gingerbread mansion built by James Yeo, a merchant, shipbuilder, and landowner who in his time was the island's wealthiest and most powerful man.

The historic Yeo House and the **Green Park Shipbuilding Museum** ★ (✆ **902/831-7947**), open June through September, are now the park's centerpieces. Managed by the province's museum and heritage foundation, they together provide a good glimpse into the prosperous lives of shipbuilders during the golden ages of PEI shipbuilding. The museum and house are open daily from mid-June through mid-September, 9am to 5pm. Admission is C$5 adults, C$3.50 students, C$14 families, and free for children under 12.

When leaving the area and returning to Charlottetown, consider taking a brief, highly scenic detour along the bay on **Route 12** ★ from Tyne Valley to MacDougall—it's a little bit longer than going straight back to Route 2 immediately, but much more rewarding.

Where to Stay

Green Park Provincial Park ★★ (✆ **902/831-7912**), on Route 12 just outside Tyne Valley, may be the most gracious and lovely park on the entire island, and it offers camping on 58 grassy and wooded sites overlooking an arm of Malpeque Bay for about C$23 to C$30 per night. There are cabins, a coin-op laundry, a playground, and a camp store.

The campground usually opens for a season of mid-June through early September; you can begin making reservations for the current season in April.

Caernarvon Cottages and Gardens ★ (Kids) The sense of quiet and the views over Malpeque Bay across the road are the lures at this attractive, well-maintained cottage complex a few minutes' drive from Tyne Valley. Four cute red-roofed pine cottages, built around 1990, are furnished simply but pretty comfortably: Each has two bedrooms, cathedral ceilings, a sleeping loft, an outdoor gas barbecue, a porch with a bay view, board games, and a kitchen well-kitted out with a stove, toaster, dishwasher, and that great, island-made Paderno cookware. This is a great place to get away with the kids—there's a playground out back, and croquet sets and kites available for loan—but it might not be the best option for a honeymoon (though there is a cute 9m/30-ft. gazebo on the lawn just steps from the bay, encircled by flower beds.) Three simply furnished rooms are also available in the main house, and their rates include a full breakfast. One caveat: The owner keeps large, energetic dogs (pets are very welcome here). If you're allergic, or your kids are nervous around big dogs, be aware.

4697 R te. 12 (about 7 or 8 miles south of Tyne Valley), Ba yside, PEI, C0B 1Y0. ✆ **800/514-9170** or 902/854-3418. w ww.cottagelink.com/caernarvon. 7 units . C$125 double and c ottage; C$700– C$750 weekly cottage double occupancy. Inn rates include full br eakfast. V. Cottages closed mid-S ept to mid-June (sometimes opened upon r equest). Pets welcome in c ottages. *In room:* TV/DVD (some units), hair dryer, kitchenette (some units), no phone.

The Doctor's Inn B&B ★ (Value) A stay at this tiny, year-round inn is a bit like visiting relatives you didn't realize you had. Upstairs in the handsome, right-in-town farmhouse are

three plain guest rooms (one with a single bed) sharing a bathroom. That might seem annoying, but you can rent two rooms here for less than the cost of one room at most other PEI inns. There's lots of wood trim, an upstairs sitting area, and extensive, certified-organic gardens out back to wander to—or even buy something from. The inn is also just 3 to 5km (2 or 3 miles) from nice Green Park Provincial Park (see "Exploring Tyne Valley," above). Best of all, the innkeepers serve up one of eastern Canada's most memorable meals in their **dining room** ★★. Diners gather for appetizers in a sitting room, then move to a large oval dining-room table for woodstove-baked bread and salads of produce from the gardens. Entrees are cooked on the same stove in the same old-fashioned kitchen; look for such things as scallops, Arctic char, salmon, or veal, and finish with a homemade dessert. Dinner is served as a four-course meal with wine for C$45 to C$55 per person; inn guests get priority when booking.

Rte. 167 (at junction with Rte. 12), Tyne Valley, PEI C0B 2C0. ✆ **902/831-3057.** w www.peisland.com/doctorsinn. 3 units. C$60 double. Rates include breakfast. MC, V. "Well-mannered" pets welcome. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* No phone.

Where to Dine

The best food in this area is the nightly dinner service at **The Doctor's Inn** ★★ (see "Where to Stay," above). Non-inn guests are requested to make reservations at least 24 hours in advance, so that the inn can be sure to have enough seats reserved for its paying guests.

If you want to eat lunch, check out the fine café in **Margate** described below. Just be aware that it's 48km (30 miles) east of Tyne Valley, nearer to PEI National Park and the Rusticos than Green Park. It's about halfway between the market town of **Kensington** and the hamlet of **Stanley Bridge,** a quick turnoff from Route 6.

The Shipwright's Café ★★ REGIONAL This friendly and locally popular restaurant moved to the village of Margate in 2001. It's elegant yet informal, and you'd be comfortable here in neat jeans or sport clothes. Expect great service, a short but serviceable wine list, and salads with organic greens to begin your meal. Dishes here include lunchtime lamb wraps, chili tostadas, curried mussels, iced or broiled-with-cheese local oysters, and the "Margate Clipper" (a lobster sandwich on potato bread with greens). Dinners run more to fish cakes, herb-crusted Atlantic salmon with lime salsa, vegetable pot pie, seafood paella with bread and aioli, tournedos of beef, and a chowder rich with plenty of those famous plump PEI mussels. It's a great local find—*if* you can find it.

11869 Rte. 6 (at junction of Rte. 233), Margate, PEI C0B 1MO. ✆ **902/836-3403.** Reservations recommended. Lunch items C$9–C$20; dinner entrees C$15–C$20 (more for lobster). MC, V. June–Sept daily 11:30am–3:30pm and 5–8:30pm. Closed Oct–May.

8

Newfoundland & Labrador

Newfoundland and Labrador (my motto: "two names, one great province") are the sorts of places that instantly cue strong sensations in the intrepid—or even the want-to-be-intrepid—traveler unfolding his or her first maps of the region. Cue Hollywood images of moose; of remote harbors, pristine, tree-ringed lakes, and towering cliffs; of icebergs floating by, with polar bears sleeping on top of them; salty shanty tales of shipwreck, heartache, and whales that got away; of looting and pillaging Vikings. It doesn't hurt that extraordinary places and names cover those maps: Jerry's Nose and Snook's Arm, Leading Tickles and Heart's Delight, Happy Adventure, Chapel Island, Mistaken Point, Misery Hill, Breakheart Point, Shuffle Board. . . . I could go on, but you get the point.

This is one of the eastern seaboard's last remaining wild places (think of it as a bit of Arctic Circle, floated down our direction), and its inaccessibility is helping to keep it that way. Untamed, windswept, and secluded, the province is also a bit of a paradox. Although the landscape is as rocky and raw as you'd expect—at times it looks as though the glaciers just finished their grinding and polishing an hour or two ago, instead of a hundred thousand years ago—residents here display a surprising warmth that amazes many travelers.

Tourists only recently started arriving here in significant numbers, so locals haven't grown weary of them—yet. People here often take time to chat up the place, offer travel advice, and listen to outsiders' impressions of their home. Even if you're the sort of traveler who's normally reluctant to engage a stranger in random conversation, you might find yourself changing your habits after a few days here. More often than not, people here really are that friendly; it's genuine.

An excursion to "The Rock," as the island of Newfoundland is sometimes called, can be experienced on many levels: not only for its extraordinary landscapes, lovely northern lights, and icebergs, but also for a rich history that catches many first-time visitors off guard. This is where European civilization made landfall in the New World—twice. First by Vikings, and then later by fishermen and settlers in the wake of Italian explorer John Cabot's arrival in 1497.

As a result, you'll find traces of North America's original history at almost every turn here; they haven't been buried beneath layers of development or neglect. Yes, some parts of North America—Savannah, Boston, New Orleans, Montréal—can claim similarly historic lineages, but there are few other places in the New World where one feels so strongly that things are pretty much the same now as they were then, at that historic moment those settlers first sailed their boats into harbor centuries ago.

And Mother Nature, in all her immense glory, is never far off here. The changing weather, huge cliffs, ice floes, whales, and fishing boats braving wind and sea always see to that: Powerfully omnipresent, they shape every visitor's impression of this place.

At the very least, if you come, learn to say the name right: "New-fun-*land*," like "understand." Got it? Good. Now go get a piece of The Rock.

1 EXPLORING NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

Maps of the Atlantic Provinces can fool you. Newfoundland (and sometimes Labrador) is commonly published as an inset map alongside Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick, making it look much smaller than those other provinces. That couldn't be farther from the truth. This is a big place, so significant time is required to travel from anywhere to anywhere else on Newfoundland island. Already big, distances get bigger when a landscape is twisted up and pulled like taffy like this one. Newfoundland just seems bigger, higher, longer, and more time-consuming when you're actually traveling in it than it looks on paper.

One quick example: The peninsula that extends northward along the west coast takes 8 to 9 hours to drive from **Port aux Basques** (where the ferry from Nova Scotia docks) to the tip at **St. Anthony**—no Sunday drive, and one that requires planning and decision-making beforehand.

So you need to plan accordingly. A weekend in this province isn't even in the realm of possibility. A couple of weeks is enough for a bare-bones tour, though you'll still be frustrated by everything you missed. A month isn't really practical. So, you're left with one option: focus, focus, focus. Select one or two regions you really want to see, narrow down on those, and save the rest of the province for another time in life—hey, you can dream, right?

For those arriving by ferry, here's one itinerary you might try: If you've got less than a week, come and go via **Port aux Basques,** and focus on wonderful **Gros Morne National Park,** especially if you're an outdoors-oriented traveler. If you've got at least 2 weeks, arrive on and leave from different ports (see below), and make a quick circuit of the island.

For those arriving by air, **St. John's** is well situated for exploring the lovely **Avalon Peninsula,** and the intriguing **Bonavista Peninsula** also isn't too distant. But if you have your heart set on venturing to Gros Morne or beyond, think again. You'll need a few weeks for that—and several days will largely be spent behind the wheel of your rental car. (It's about 7 to 8 hours driving from St. John's to the national park.) The best option, if you're dead-set on Gros Morne, is probably to fly into St. John's and depart via **Deer Lake**—a more expensive option, but also one that gives you more time in the more spectacular places.

ESSENTIALS

WEATHER & TIME The weather in Newfoundland could charitably be called "mercurial." You might experience all four seasons during a week-long summer vacation here—from decently warm, sunny days (the average high temperature in summer is about 70°F/21°C) to downright frigid ones (it can dip to 40°F/4°C or lower on summer evenings). If you have rain gear and golf umbrellas, bring them; when the rain pairs up with high winds, the results are not fun. If you have thick sweaters, bring a few of those too. Shorts? Only for hiking or swimming in a hotel pool; you won't be wearing those much.

If you're specifically coming to see **icebergs,** late spring's thaw (mid-May to late June) is the peak season here, though every year is different.

Note that Newfoundland has its own **special time zone.** The "Newfoundland time zone" is a half-hour ahead of Atlantic time (which all the rest of the Atlantic provinces

It's All in a Name

The official name of this province is "Newfoundland and Labrador." But if I kept writing that out, this book would be twice as long (and heavy) as it is. And my fingers would be really tired. So I'm going to abbreviate it as "Newfoundland" for almost all purposes in this chapter. Labradoreans, bear with us. We know you're there.

in this book use), and 1½ hours ahead of Eastern Standard (New York) time. So when it's 9am in Manhattan, it's already 10:30am in St. John's (but only 10:00am in Halifax).

VISITOR INFORMATION Visitor information centers aren't as numerous or well organized in Newfoundland as they are in Nova Scotia, where every small community seemingly has a spot where you can stock up on truckloads of pretty color brochures. In Newfoundland, you're better off instead stocking up on maps and information in St. John's or just after you get off the ferry. That's as good as it's going to get. Note that tourist information centers on this island are open from mid-May through the first week of October; some close sooner than that.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Traveller's Guide and Map, published by the province's department of tourism, is hefty and helpful, with listings of all attractions and accommodations. Request a free copy before arriving by calling ✆ **800/563-6353**, e-mailing **tourisminfo@mail.gov.nf.ca**, or by regular mail (to Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6). The guide is also available on the ferries and at provincial information centers.

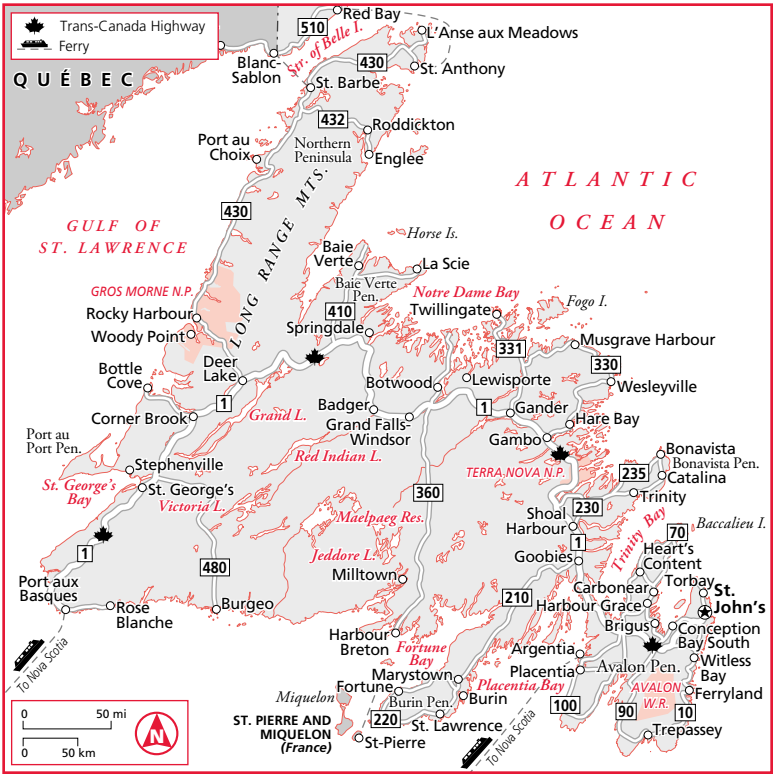
Newfoundland is also better wired than you might expect when it comes to the Internet, and many residents and businesses maintain websites—a big help when trying to cobble together your travel plans.

GETTING THERE Many travelers arrive here by **ferry**—particularly if they're doing a Nova Scotia/Newfoundland combination trip. **Marine Atlantic** (✆ **800/341-7981;** www.marine-atlantic.ca) operates the two ferries to and from Newfoundland. Both depart from **Sydney,** on the northern tip of Nova Scotia's Cape Breton Island. The **year-round ferry** runs to **Port aux Basques,** with as many as four sailings each way daily during the peak summer season. The crossing takes about 5 hours; one-way fares are C$29 adults, plus C$82 for an automobile.

There's also a **seasonal ferry** (from mid-June through late September) that connects North Sydney with **Argentia** (on the southwest tip of the Avalon Peninsula, near St. John's). This crossing is offered three times per week, in summer only, and takes 14 to 15 hours. The one-way fare is C$81 adults, C$167 for regular-size vehicles; a bed on the boat costs from an additional C$29 (in a bunkroom) to C$153 (for a four-berth private cabin).

On both ferries, children 5 to 12 years old ride for half-price; there's a slight discount for seniors; and the ride's free for all children under 5 years old.

For all ferries, **advance reservations**—a few weeks ahead at least—are *strongly* advised during the peak travel season, especially if you want to sleep in a cabin during an overnight sailing. (If you didn't make a reservation, you can always pull up to the dock and wait in a line for available spaces to open up, but you could spend a half day or a day



waiting.) The terminals on both ends all have snack bars, restrooms with showers, television lounges, and up-to-date facilities.

Air transportation to Newfoundland is typically through **St. John's International Airport** (airline code: YYT), although scheduled flights also arrive in Deer Lake, Gander, and St. Anthony.

Continental (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com) flies into St. John's daily from Newark, while **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) flies in daily from Toronto, Halifax, and Montréal. **WestJet** (✆ **888/937-8538;** www.westjet.com) connects St. John's with Halifax, Toronto (Pearson International), Ottawa, Edmonton, and Calgary. And **Porter Airlines** (✆ **888/619-8622** or 416/619-8622; www.flyporter.com) now connects St. John's with Halifax, Ottawa, and Toronto's City Centre Airport.

GETTING AROUND To explore the countryside, you'll almost certainly need a **rental car** (bus service is sporadic). Major rental companies with fleets in St. John's include **Avis, Budget, Dollar, Hertz, National, Thrifty,** and **Rent-A-Wreck** (see the "Fast Facts," p. 333, for a list of rental-car company websites).

For a concise look at your available options from St. John's airport, consult the airport's website at **www.stjohnsairport.com**. Click first on "What An Airport Can Do for

RV There Yet?

Newfoundland by RV? No, I haven't done it, but a lot of people do, and they report that it's a fine place to bring a rolling home. The island's single road, the Trans-Canada Highway, is in surprisingly good condition. So long as you remember to gas up and buy supplies now and then, it'll work; there are plenty of friendly campgrounds spaced out across the island with spaces and hookups for campers (many with Wi-Fi access), plus attractive coves, villages, and parks all along the route. There also seem to be a number of spots where you can park overnight for free (without services, obviously). One caution: If you are bringing the camper, don't plan to negotiate it around the streets of St. John's, which is historic, quaint, and a city . . . thus crammed with narrow streets and tight turns. Instead, camp in lovely **Pippy Park** (see p. 317) a few miles northwest of town, then call a taxi, catch a ride with a friend, or deploy your "toad": RV-speak for the passenger car you've "towed" behind you.

You" (no, I don't get it, either), then on "Parking, Car Rentals & Taxis" to pull up a full list of the current airport rental kiosks, plus their local and national phone numbers. Many of these car-rental chains, as well as some independent outfits, also rent cars in **smaller communities** around the province such as **Corner Brook, Deer Lake, Happy Valley-Goose Bay,** and **Port aux Basques.** Consult the visitor's guide, or check rental chain websites directly, for details about renting in these smaller branch locations.

Remember to sock away some extra cash for gasoline when traveling on this island, however: The price of fuel on Newfoundland tends to be a bit higher than in other Atlantic Provinces, and the distances are greater.

If you're including **Labrador** in your itinerary, you'll probably use the **M/V *Apollo* ferry** (✆ **866/535-2567** from Newfoundland, or 709/535-0810), which connects St. Barbe, Newfoundland, with Blanc-Sablon, Labrador, 9 months out of the year through the scenic Strait of Belle Isle. The trip normally takes about 90 minutes, though it can take hours if (as happens in late spring) icebergs are jamming up the strait. The trip costs C$23 for regular-sized passenger car and driver, C$7.50 for additional adults, and C$6 for students. It departs one to three times per day. The only time it doesn't run is from mid-January through mid-April, though it also stops running anytime ice blocks the passage in winter. There's also a C$10 fee to reserve a spot in advance.

You can also travel around Newfoundland island **by plane,** though it's not cheap. **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) connects St. John's with Deer Lake and Gander. **Provincial Airlines** (✆ **800/563-2800** from eastern Canada or 709/576-1666; www.provincialairlines.ca) flies from St. John's to St. Anthony, Deer Lake, Goose Bay, Wabush, and Stephenville on Newfoundland. **Air Labrador** (✆ **800/563-3042;** www.airlabrador.com) flies between St. John's and Deer Lake.

2 THE GREAT OUTDOORS

BIKING Reality check: Bike touring in Newfoundland isn't for the faint of heart. It's not that the hills here are necessarily brutally steep or long (though some are). It's the *weather* that can be downright demoralizing. Expect some blustery days, complete with

blasts of wind and horizontal rains that can bring forward-pedaling to a standstill. The happiest bike tourists seem to be those who allow themselves frequent stays in motels or inns, where they can find hot showers and places to dry their gear.

Freewheeling Adventures ★ (✆ **800/672-0775** or 902/857-3600; www.freewheeling.ca) operates van-supported bike tours that overnight in hotels and B&Bs along the way. Its **Viking Tour** ★★★ of the northern coast of Newfoundland is a week of pure cycling pleasure (and tough riding—one day involves 160km/100 miles of cycling!). It costs C$2,400 to C$2,700, depending on whether you use their guides or make up your own itinerary, plus a C$350 supplement if you travel solo (because you'll sleep alone in the inn rooms). There is also a new option for a 3-day extension of the tour into **Labrador.** Lodging is included in either plan, though the full plan includes all your meals, equipment rentals, van transfers, a bonus fjord boat trip, and a whale/iceberg-watching boat trip in the package. Needless to say, go for that one.

The same outfit offers a similar 8-day tour of the **Avalon Peninsula** (very near St. John's), as well, for C$2,500 to C$2,700, again depending on whether you self-cater or leave it all up to them.

Newfoundland-based **Aspenwood Tours** (✆ **709/673-4255**) arranges shorter mountain-biking day trips in and around the central sections of Newfoundland for C$35 to C$50 per person—the price depends mostly on whether you've brought your own bike to the island or not.

BIRD-WATCHING Except in the tropics, bird-watching doesn't get much better than it does in Newfoundland and Labrador—this province is home to some of the most concentrated bird populations on the continent (and the world).

Eastern Newfoundland and the butterfly-shaped Avalon Peninsula are especially rich in bird life. About 40km (25 miles) south of St. John's, just offshore from Route 10, is **Witless Bay Ecological Reserve** ★★ (✆ **709/635-4520**), a cluster of several islands hosting the largest colony of breeding puffins and kittiwakes in the western Atlantic. And down at the southwestern corner of the peninsula—via Route 100, it's about 120 miles' driving from St. John's—**Cape St. Mary's** ★★ and its **ecological reserve** ★★ feature a remarkable sea stack that's home to a big colony of northern gannets. See the "Avalon Peninsula" section in this chapter for more details on these parks.

CAMPING In addition to its two national parks, Newfoundland also maintains a number of provincial parks, some with campsites. About a dozen more parks were privatized in 1997 and are now run as commercial enterprises, but many still have campgrounds as well. Parks and campgrounds (both public and private) are covered fully in the provincial travel guide.

CANOEING & KAYAKING Pristine rivers and lakes abound in both Newfoundland and Labrador, so it's relatively easy to plot out a great canoe trip—with a little local assistance, that is. Potential journeys range from placid putters around a pond near St. John's to world-class descents of Labradoran rivers hundreds of miles long. Ask at the provincial tourist offices about canoeing brochures, guidebooks, and lists of accredited outfitters.

Newfoundland is also ideal for exploring by sea kayak. There's just one catch: The water's absolutely frigid. (There's a reason you see icebergs offshore. It's called the Labrador Current.) Kayaking here is a serious endeavor, and you need to be very well prepared in the event you tip over and end up in the icy drink. ***Caution:*** Use a guide.

The St. John's area alone features a ton of possible paddles, plus a handful of good outfitters who lead them. From a base camp about 90 minutes outside St. John's, for

instance, **Coastal Safari** (✆ **877/888-3020** or 709/579-3977; www.coastalsafari.com) offers extended paddling tours from May through the end of August, including an eponymous 8-day **"coastal safari"** ★★ that epitomizes the word *eco-adventure.* The tour begins with a pickup from the St. John's airport and includes 5 days' paddling in and out of an Avalon Peninsula base camp, plus several overnights in the St. John's area and the scenic village of Harbour Mille. All kayaks, transport, food (and wine, if you wish), camping gear, and even snorkels are included in this package. You sleep in tents with comfortable support pads or bed-and-breakfast inns. Contact the company (or check its website) for current prices and tour schedules.

The area northeast of **Terra Nova National Park,** with its archipelago centering around St. Brendan's Island, is another great choice for a paddle. Two-hour guided sea kayak tours leave from the park's Marine Interpretation Centre to explore protected Newman's Cove (see the "Terra Nova National Park" section, later in this chapter, for more details).

Farther north on the island, **Aspenwood Tours** (✆ **709/673-4255;** www.aspenwood tours.com) in Springdale—which I have already mentioned in "Bicycling," above—does half- and full-day guided paddles and rentals.

FISHING Newfoundland and Labrador are legendary among serious anglers, especially those stalking the Atlantic salmon, which can weigh up to 40 pounds. Other prized species include landlocked salmon, lake trout, brook trout, and northern pike. More than 100 fishing-guide services on the island and mainland provide everything from simple advice to complete packages that include bush-plane transportation, lodging, and personal guides. To fish for salmon, nonprovincial residents must purchase a special license and be accompanied by a licensed guide (though you can fish some waters within a kilometer/half-mile of a provincial highway without a license; check with the province for specifics).

If you're truly serious about fishing, get your hands on the latest *Newfoundland & Labrador Angler's Guide* for updated regulations. It's available at most visitor centers or by calling the provincial tourist office at ✆ **800/563-6353;** it's also posted online, in PDF format, on the province's fisheries website at **www.nfl.dfo-mpo.gc.ca**.

HIKING & WALKING Newfoundland has hundreds of trails, some along spectacular coastlines leading to abandoned villages; but you'll have to work a little to find them, since tourism isn't fully developed here (thank goodness). The most obvious hiking trails tend to be centered around national parks and historic sites, where they're often fairly short—good for a half-day's hike, rarely more. Some towns are finally realizing the recreational potential for their trails, and have begun locally publishing maps and brochures directing you to them. The **Bonavista Peninsula** and the **Eastport Peninsula,** both on Newfoundland's east coast, are two areas with world-class trails.

But the best-maintained trails are at **Gros Morne National Park** ★★★ (see p. 277), with more than 95km (60 miles) of trails in all. There's also some serious off-track hiking on the dramatic **Long Range** for backpackers equipped to set out for a couple of days. Ask at the park's visitor center for more information on hiking in it.

3 SOUTHWESTERN NEWFOUNDLAND

For most travelers arriving by ferry, this region is their first introduction to The Rock. It's like starting a symphony without a prelude, jumping right to the crescendo: There's

instant drama in the brawny, verdant Long Range Mountains that run parallel to the Trans-Canada Highway en route to **Corner Brook.** Then come the towering seaside cliffs of the Port au Port Peninsula and intriguing coastal villages just waiting for your exploration. It's a polar-opposite travel experience to, say, flying into Charlottetown or Halifax and lazing along the backroads of PEI or the South Shore of Nova Scotia.

PORT AUX BASQUES

Port aux Basques is the main gateway for travelers arriving in Newfoundland, as ferries connect the town with Nova Scotia year-round. It's a good way station for those arriving very late on a ferry or departing very early in the morning; otherwise, it can be viewed in a couple hours when coming or going, or even skipped altogether en route to the province's much greater treasures.

Still, it's a somewhat appealing harborside village, perched on treeless emerald hills that define the terrain around the harbor. Downtown consists of bright, boxy houses on hills around a compact commercial zone. (This is a theme you'll soon get used to in Newfoundland.) A narrow **boardwalk** ★ snakes along water's edge and links the ferry terminal with the town; it's worth a walk if you've got an hour to kill, especially at sunset, which brings out the contours of the surrounding hills. At the edge of town are a tiny shopping mall and newer residential neighborhoods; there's also a movie theater and some family-style restaurants.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Port aux Basques is usually reached by ferry from Nova Scotia. See "Exploring Newfoundland & Labrador," earlier, for complete ferry details. The Trans-Canada Highway (Rte. 1) is the only highway of substance on this island; it links the major communities in southwestern Newfoundland, then continues all the way to St. John's—about 900km (about 560 miles, or 10 to 12 hours of driving, including stops for fuel and rest, if the weather's clear) from tip to tip.

VISITOR INFORMATION In Port aux Basques, the **Visitor Information Centre** (✆ **709/695-2262**) is located on the Trans-Canada Highway about 3km (2 miles) from the ferry terminal. You can't miss it: It's the big modern building on the right. This is the largest VIC in this province, so stock up while you've got the chance. Displays orient you to the island's regions. It's open daily from May through mid-October.

Exploring Port aux Basques

Port Aux Basques (technically, its full name is Channel-Port Aux Basques) is a workday town built on fishing and, now, tourists getting onto and off the ferry boats to Nova Scotia. There's not much of interest in the actual downtown.

On your way out of town, however, you pass the **Heritage Museum Port aux Basques** ★★ (✆ **709/695-7560**) on Route 1, which began life as a train museum but now folds in interesting local artifacts, as well. It's a pretty good (though seasonal) museum open daily from mid-June through mid-September, 9am to 9pm.

The original focus of this facility was the **"Newfie Bullet,"** a much-maligned but now much-reminisced-about passenger train that ran between Port aux Basques and St. John's from 1898 until 1969. (The cross-island highway opened in 1966, dooming the train.) The train required 27 hours to make the trip (which was hardly bulletlike), but it did get the job done even in deepest winter. During a tour of several restored rail cars, you can learn how the train made its run through heavy blizzards; how passengers slept at night

(very cozily, it turns out); and what life aboard the mail car and caboose was like. Train tours from the costumed staff cost C$5 for adults or C$10 for families.

In a newer section, this museum now also displays the holdings of the former **Gulf Museum,** whose interesting collections include a very rare Portuguese astrolabe dating from the 1620s—fishermen used it to navigate their way from Europe using the stars as guideposts. (A local diver found it in the waters just offshore.) Admission fees are the same as for the railway-museum section.

Departing from the edge of the Heritage Museum is another "sight," the **T'Railway** ★, a coast-to-coast, 885km (550-mile) pathway along the Bullet's old train bed. It's used by pedestrians, bikers, and ATVs, and in this stretch runs through marshlands and along the ocean to Cheeseman Park (see below) and beyond. It's a good spot to get your mountain bike limbered up for further adventures.

J. T. Cheeseman Provincial Park ★ (✆ **709/695-2222**) is 16km (10 miles) west of town on Route 1 (confusingly, you follow "Rte. 1 East" to get there) and has one of the prettiest beaches in Newfoundland. Much of the park lies along sandy dunes, which are home to the **piping plover,** an endangered species; these plucky birds scratch shallow nests out of the sand but are very vulnerable to beach walkers; tread lightly. An observation platform offers a view of the plover's habitat—bring binoculars and be patient. You can swim at the park's lovely Cape Ray Beach if you dare, but bear in mind that the water's chilly and there are no lifeguards. Walk it instead, beachcombing for the mussels, sea urchins, and other goodies fetching up in the wake of the tide here.

The park also maintains about 100 campsites costing C$15 per night, depending on the level of amenities. One bonus: You're right alongside a section of the T'Railway, which is good for walking or mountain biking. Admission to the park is C$5 per car.

Where to Stay

About a half-dozen hotels and B&Bs offer no-frills shelter to travelers at Port aux Basques. The two biggest are **Hotel Port aux Basques,** Route 1 (✆ **877/695-2171** or 709/695-2171; www.hotelpab.com), and **St. Christopher's Hotel,** Caribou Road (✆ **800/563-4779** or 709/695-3500; www.stchrishotel.com).

Both of these properties could be described as "budget modern," with their clean basic rooms and dated bedspread prints in architecturally undistinguished buildings. Both maintain around 50 rooms and a simple restaurant, and both charge from around C$85 to about C$150 for a double. (Some rooms at Hotel Port aux Basques have small in-bath Jacuzzis, while some at St. Christopher's have full kitchens.) I'd give St. Christopher's a slight edge, since it's located on a high bluff with views of the town and harbor.

Where to Dine

Dining opportunities are limited. Both hotels mentioned above have dining rooms serving basic, filling meals. A short walk from the ferry terminal on the boardwalk is the **Harbour Restaurant,** at easy-to-remember 1 Main St. (✆ **709/695-3238**). It's a family-style restaurant that serves budget-friendly meals, most priced at C$10 or less. Expect fried fish, fried chicken, fish cakes, sandwiches, and the like. Most tables have good views of the harbor. It's often open quite late.

CORNER BROOK

If you find it hard to believe that **Corner Brook** (population 27,000, suburbs included) is Newfoundland's second-largest city, then you've never been to the island; this place practically feels Tokyo-sized after traveling through the far-apart spaces of this province.

Like St. John's, it is dramatically sited—in this case, on the banks of the Humber River, which winds down through verdant mountains from beyond Deer Lake, then turns the corner (hence the name) to flow into Humber Arm. The hills on the south shore of the Humber are nearly as tall as those in **Gros Morne National Park,** making a great backdrop for the town, which has gradually expanded up the shoulders of the hills.

This is a young city with a long history. The area was first explored and charted in 1767 by Capt. James Cook, who spent 23 days mapping the islands at the mouth of the bay. But it wasn't until early in the 20th century that the city started to take its present shape. Copper mines and the railroad brought in workers; a paper mill, which still dominates downtown, was constructed in the early 1920s. (By 1945, it was the largest paper mill in the world.)

Yet the city has grown beyond its stature as a mill town, and has a more vibrant feel than other similar cities anchored by heavy industry. This is no doubt aided in large part by the energy from two institutions of higher learning here: Sir Wilfred Grenfell College of Memorial University of Newfoundland and the College of the North Atlantic. But the area has *also* done a good job of creating an alternate economy based on its scenery—a decent-sized Canadian film studio is now located here, for instance, bringing much-needed jobs and touro-dollars.

You'll also find plenty of services such as grocery stores, banks, hotels, gas stations, and restaurants. In fact, this is your last chance to stock up with some actual choice if you're headed to **Gros Morne National Park**. From here on out, you'll be dependent on small grocery stores and mom-and-pop restaurants.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Corner Brook is on the Trans-Canada Highway, about 217km (135 miles) north of Port aux Basques and about 56km (35 miles) from Deer Lake. Air access is via **Deer Lake Regional Airport** (✆ **709/635-3601;** www.deerlakeairport.com); see "Deer Lake," below. You can also fly into **Stephenville's** airport, about 80km (50 miles) away.

VISITOR INFORMATION Corner Brook maintains a **visitor information center** (✆ **709/639-9792**) just off the Trans-Canada Highway, uphill at the intersection of West Valley Road and Confederation Drive (near the Mamateek Inn). It's usually open daily from mid-June through September, sometimes on weekdays during spring and fall. Also consult the "Tourism" section of the city's website, **www.cornerbrook.com**, before coming.

Exploring Corner Brook

Downtown Corner Brook looks promising on approach—it's located on the hill-flanked Humber Arm, a well-protected ocean inlet and famed salmon-fishing area. But the actual city center is likely to disappoint you, since it consists mainly of a large paper mill plus a couple shopping malls. These enclosed malls offer little charm; the mill offers an interesting olfactory experience when the wind is blowing wrong.

It's still worth a quick detour into town, though, if you're passing through. Tree-lined **West Street** is fun to explore (it's full of coffee shops, restaurants, and the like), while the **Broadway** shopping area has a bit of a frontier-town look to it.

The **Corner Brook Museum and Archives,** 2 West St. (✆ **709/634-2518**; www.cornerbrookmuseum.ca), are housed in a solid 1920s-era building that once was home to customs offices, the court, and the post and telegraph offices. A visit here shows you just how new this city is (grainy black-and-white photos show empty hills surrounding

the paper mill as late as the 1920s), and how civilized it has become since its establishment. An assortment of locally significant artifacts (a doctor's desk, ship's models) round out the collection. The museum is open daily from 9am to 5pm in July and August, weekdays only (and until 4:30pm) the rest of the year. Admission is C$5 for adults and C$3 for students, and children under age 12 enter for free.

Nearby, from the Glynmill Inn, you can follow a connector trail to the **Corner Brook Stream Trail** ★, which runs right through the heart of the city along groomed gravel paths and over footbridges. The trail is still being developed along 19km (12 miles) of the stream (which was once the city's water supply); for now it offers access to a narrow and pleasantly green sanctuary within the city, in two sections. From Glynmill Inn you round a man-made pond; you can head upstream to **Margaret Bowater Park** (a locally popular spot with a swimming pool and playground) or downstream toward Main Street and City Hall.

Outdoor Pursuits

For outdoor enthusiasts, Corner Brook makes an excellent base for exploring outlying mountains and waters.

Mountain bikers should plan a stop by **TNT Bicycles,** 8 Maple Valley Rd. (✆ **709/634-6799**). These guys know their business; ask for suggestions on where to go and for the free map of backcountry bike routes. Didn't bring your bike? You can also rent one here, and the shop leads group rides twice a week in summer, starting around 7pm (it stays light late here). Note that the shop is closed Sundays.

Some of the region's best **hiking** is found along **Route 450,** on the way to Bottle Cove (see "A Road Trip to Bottle Cove," below, for more information on this area). But other hikes can get you up into the hills around Corner Brook more quickly. At **Marble Mountain**'s ski area (see below), east of town on the Trans-Canada Highway, you can park in the ski lodge's parking lot and follow a kilometer-long (1/2-mile) trail up to **Steady Brook Falls,** which become most impressive after a summer rain. More extensive hikes are outlined in the local hiking guide and map available around town.

All of eastern Canada has only *one* downhill ski area I'd consider a true skiing destination, and that's right here: **Marble Mountain** ★, just a 10-minute drive from Corner Brook. (You can see its steep hills just north of the city.) With a location near the Gulf of St. Lawrence, in the path of northwesterly winds, it gets plenty of powder, and the 518m (1,700-ft.) vertical drop is pretty respectable. There are 37 trails on the property, including a new novice run and two pristine "glade runs," plus eastern Canada's only high-speed detachable quad chairs. Many of the runs here are open to snowboarders, as well. Some all-inclusive packages here include airfare from elsewhere in Canada, lodging in a villa on the mountain, lift tickets, and a rental car.

Ask for a brochure by calling ✆ **888/462-7253** or 709/637-7601 or checking the resort's website at **www.skimarble.com**. You reach the ski hill by taking exit 8 off the Trans-Canada Highway.

Where to Stay & Dine

Corner Brook is home to several convenient chain motels. Popular choices include the simple **Mamateek Inn,** 64 Maple Valley Rd. (✆ **800/563-8600** or 709/639-8901; www.mamateekinn.ca) and the **Greenwood Inn & Suites,** 48 West St. (✆ **800/399-5381** or 709/634-5381; www.greenwoodcornerbrook.com), within walking distance of the city's best restaurant (see below). The Greenwood Inn more resembles a business

A Road Trip to Bottle Cove

One of western Newfoundland's most scenic drives is between **Corner Brook** and **Bottle Cove,** driving west on Route 450, also known as Captain Cook's Trail. It takes about 45 minutes to an hour to drive to the end of the road at Bottle Cove—if you don't make any stops. But you should. This region stands up well to careful exploration.

The road is winding and dramatic, running between the looming Blow Me Down Mountains (gotta love the name) and the dark waters of Humber Arm. Near **Lark Harbour** is the **Blow Me Down Provincial Park** ★ (✆ **709/681-2430**), a fine destination for a hike and a picnic. Start off with the kilometer-long (1/2-mile) hike to the lookout tower. Along the way you can view the Governor's Staircase, a rock formation that's something like 450 million years old. Continue along the up-and-down trail for 3 more kilometers (2 miles) to Tortoise Point, with its exceptional views of the Bay of Islands. The park is open daylight hours from June through early September; admission is C$5 per car. There's also a campground here, with about two dozen sites; see "Where to Stay & Dine" under Deer Lake for details.

On the way back to Corner Brook is the **Blow Me Down Nature Trail** ★★, west of the village of Frenchman's Cove and about 530m (1/3 of a mile) west of the bridge over the brook. This is an especially appealing walk on a warm day, since this easy 800m (1/2-mile) trail leads to great swimming holes in Blow Me Down Brook. Bring towels.

hotel with its fitness center, indoor swimming pool, and Wi-Fi in the lobby. Most double rooms cost from C$90 to C$120 per night at the two hotels (as high as C$195 for a suite at the Greenwood).

Camping is offered on the north banks of the Humber from mid-June through early September at **Kinsmen Prince Edward Park** ★ (✆ **709/637-1580**), which has 80 campsites spread along a bluff from which you can often spot osprey and bald eagles. Both fully serviced and nonserviced sites are available, for C$18 to C$23 per night; if you're a car camper or nature enthusiast, note that the park also avails and markets itself to RVs, so you can expect a small parade of big rigs on the grounds. To find the park, exit the Trans-Canada Highway at Marble Mountain and follow Route 440 until you see the signs—about 10 minutes' drive from downtown.

Glynmill Inn ★ (Value) This Tudor inn is set in a quiet, parklike setting, an easy stroll to the services and shops of West Street. Built in 1924 and extensively renovated, the four-story hotel's appealing detail is charming. (The place was designated as a heritage building in 2001.) Rooms are tastefully decorated with colonial reproductions; the popular Tudor Suite has a private Jacuzzi, and there are three other luxury "executives suites." You'll get far more character here than at the chain motels in town, for roughly the same price. The inn's two dining rooms—the Carriage Room and the Wine Cellar—are quite popular, if institutional (they do a lot of conventions and banquets), but the food isn't bad. There's also a good pub and small art gallery.

 1b C obb Lane (near West St.), C orner Br ook, NL A2H 6E6. ✆ **800/563-4400** or 709/634-5181. F ax 709/634-5106. w ww.glynmillinn.ca. 81 units . C$79–C$155 double. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 dining rooms; bar; fitness center. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units), hair dryer.

DEER LAKE

Deer Lake, 48km (30 miles) north of Corner Brook on the Trans-Canada Highway, is an unassuming crossroads near the head of the Humber River where travelers coming from the south continue on the Trans-Canada Highway toward St. John's or veer northwest 72km (45 miles) to amazing **Gros Morne National Park.** Nearby **Deer Lake Airport** (✆ **709/635-3601;** www.deerlakeairport.com) is *the* air hub for western Newfoundland, with scheduled flights both within the island and to Halifax on several airlines. Car rentals are available from the terminal.

There's little else to detain a visitor here, however. Buy gas, grab brochures at the **visitor information center** (✆ 709/635-2202; open daily mid-May through September) on the Trans-Canada Highway, and then push on. If the main information center's closed, there's a second **visitor information desk** (✆ 709/635-1003 or 635-2077) at Deer Lake airport, open year-round.

Exploring Deer Lake

The **Newfoundland Insectarium** (✆ **866/635-5454** or 709/635-4545; www.nf insectarium.com) is on Route 440, just off the Trans-Canada Highway. Inside a retrofitted dairy farm framed in red cedar, its exhibits are mostly located on the spacious second floor: more than 4,000 mounted insects (no fake bugs here) and two dozen-plus terrariums of—if you're eating lunch right now, set it aside—live insects including tiger beetles, cockroaches, honeybees, and other creepy crawlies. A walking trail and bug-themed gift shop (including chocolate-coated crickets) round out the experience. I'd say the appeal of this place is not necessarily universal, but they sometimes do special exhibits on butterflies, and those are definitely worth checking out.

The facility is open to the public daily in July and August, from 9am to 6pm; daily but slightly shorter hours (from noon on Sundays, for instance) in May, June, September, and October; and closed from November through April. Admission is C$10 adults, C$8.50 seniors, C$6.50 children ages 5 to 14, C$30 families.

Where to Stay & Dine

In addition to the motel listed below, **Blow Me Down Provincial Park** ★ (✆ **709/681-2430**) has 28 forested campsites for C$15 per night. See "A Road Trip to Bottle Cove," above, for more information.

Deer Lake Motel This plain-looking but serviceable brick motel is located right on the Trans-Canada Highway and has about 50 clean and basic rooms outfitted with televisions, clock radios, high-speed Internet access, coffeemakers, hair dryers, and ironing boards. The motel also maintains a coffee shop, pubby lounge, and dining room. This is just a place to lay your head if you're arriving late en route to Gros Morne or points north or east, and don't feel like driving farther; otherwise, there's little reason to overnight in Deer Lake.

Trans-Canada H wy., Deer Lake , NL A0K 2E0. ✆ **800/563-2144** (from Newfoundland only) or 709/635-2108. Fax 709/635-3842. w ww.deerlakemotel.com. 54 units. C$85–C$129 double. AE, DC, MC, V. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; bar. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

4 GROS MORNE NATIONAL PARK ★★★

Gros Morne (pronunciation: "grow morn") translates roughly from the French as "big/gloomy place," and if you happen to arrive here on a day when the fog's blowing across the road and clouds descend from the glacial valleys, you'll figure out how this area got its name. Even on brilliantly sunny days, there's something imposing about the stark mountains, lonely fjords cut off from ocean, and miles of tangled spruce forest here.

Nevertheless, **Gros Morne National Park** is one of Canada's greatest natural treasures, and few who visit here fail to come away with a sense of awe. In fact, it's been officially designated as one of the world's greatest natural treasures: In 1987, the park was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site, largely due to the importance of a section of the park known as **the Tablelands.** This weird geological quirk formed eons ago, when a portion of the earth's mantle broke loose during the continents' drifting and was forced up to the surface, creating an eerie, rust-colored tableau unlike any you've probably ever seen before. (See "Journey to the Center of the Earth," below, for more information about this formation.)

The park is divided into two sections, northern and southern, by Bonne Bay (which is locally pronounced like "Bombay"), so exploring both sections by car requires some time. The park's visitor center, and most of the tourist services, are found in the village of **Rocky Harbour** in the northern section—but you'd be shortchanging yourself if you skip a detour through the dramatic **southern section,** a place that looks to have had a rough birth, geologically speaking. Fortunately, a small ferry—variously referred to as the "water taxi" and the "water shuttle"—runs between the two sections three times a day (see "Getting There," below).

To do Gros Morne justice, plan on spending at least 3 days here. (A week would not be too much if you're a serious hiker.) The dramatic terrain throughout the park is on a scale big enough to be appreciated even if you never even get out of your car. But to *really* get a sense of the place, do get out—see it by foot, by bike, or from a boat. Some excellent hikes and awe-inspiring boat rides can take you right into the heart of the park's wildest places. Check with the park's information center for maps and details.

Of, if you'd prefer to let someone else do the planning for you, try **Gros Morne Adventures** (✆ **800/685-4624** or 709/458-2722; www.grosmorneadventures.com). Bob Hicks and Sue Rendell organize and lead guided hiking, biking, walking, sea kayaking, and multi-sport excursions throughout both sections of this amazing park.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE From the Trans-Canada Highway in **Deer Lake,** turn west on **Route 430** (the Viking Trail), which runs through the northern section of the park. It's only about 72km (45 miles) from Deer Lake to the visitor center at **Rocky Harbour,** but it'll take you nearly 2 hours to complete this up-and-down, twisting trip.

To reach the scenic southern section, turn left (south) on Route 431 in **Wiltondale** partway to Rocky Harbour; from that turnoff, it's about 32km (20 miles) to the harbor village of **Woody Point,** which again will take you the better part of an hour.

If you want to see both halves in a single day (which I recommend), Woody Point links up with the harbor in **Norris Point** (in the northern section) via a small **water taxi.** This 15-minute ride saves you an hour or more of driving, but it only runs three times a day and demand for space is high. The fare is C$7 per adult one-way or C$12 as a roundtrip,

 C$5/C$8 for students, or C$15/C$26 for families; contact operator **BonTours** (✆ **888/458-2016** or 709/458-2016; www.bontours.ca) for more details.

VISITOR INFORMATION The park's main **visitor information center** (✆ **709/458-2417**) is just south of **Rocky Harbour** on Route 430. It's open daily from 9am to 9pm from late June through early September, from 9am to 5pm most days in May, June, September, and October (weekdays only in early May). The center features exhibits on park geology and wildlife; there's also a short film about the park and a good little bookstore stocked with field guides. Interactive media kiosks are well done; you can view video clips previewing the hiking trails by touching a video screen. Ask for your backcountry camping permit here.

Across the bay just outside of Woody Point on Route 431 en route to Trout River is the newer **Discovery Centre.** This building is an enlightening stop, with interactive exhibits, a fossil room, and a multimedia theater to help make sense of the landscape. It's open daily from mid-May through early October, though more hard information is available at the visitor center.

Among the many privately sponsored sources of information, one of the best I've seen is the website **DownhomeOutdoors.com**. The website links to a massive, 132-page Newfoundland/Labrador travel guide in PDF format that you can view right online without having to print or carry anything. The guide includes extremely detailed listings (sponsored, of course) for outdoor outfitters, campgrounds, motels, and other services in and around Gros Morne, plus maps of some key park ponds and towns.

FEES All visitors must obtain a permit for any activity within the park. From May through October, the daily entrance fee is C$9.80 adults, C$8.30 seniors, C$4.90 children 6 to 18, and C$20 families; in the off season, these fees are reduced by about 25%. Annual passes are also available for C$49 per adult or about C$98 per family, a great deal if you'll be entering the park on at least 5 different calendar days.

GROS MORNE'S SOUTHERN SECTION ★★★

The road through the southern section of Gros Morne dead-ends at **Trout River.** This southern section contains some of eastern Canada's most dramatic terrain. Yes, you can glimpse the rust-colored Tablelands from north of Bonne Bay near Rocky Harbour and call it a day. But without actually walking through that desolate landscape, you miss much of its impact. The southern section also contains several lost-in-time fishing villages that predate the park's creation in 1973, plus a newer Discovery Centre (see above) with exhibits focusing on the park's unique natural history.

The scenic centerpiece of the southern section is **Trout River Pond** ★★, a landlocked fjord some 14km (9 miles) long. You can hike along its northern shore to get a great view of **The Narrows** ★, where cliffs nearly pinch the pond in two. Or, if you're interested in expending fewer calories and getting a look from water level, stop at the gift shop between the village of Trout River and the pond. A touring outfit has operated 2½-hour **boat tours** ★ in previous summers, one to three times daily, aboard a 40-passenger boat; the surrounding, panoramic views are simply breathtaking.

Hikes & Walks

There are so many great hikes in this section of the park that it's difficult to select just a few. But I'll try.

For a superb panoramic view encompassing both sea and mountains, watch for the **Lookout Trail** ★★, which begins in the parking lot of the new Discovery Centre (see

above) outside of Woody Point, on the way to Trout River. You ascend to high meadows, then cross a boardwalk across alpine terrain and up to the summit of Partridgeberry Hill to one of the best all-in-one vistas of the entire park. It's a great introduction to the park. This steep trail is about 5km (3 miles) long in all (round-trip); allow about 2½ hours.

The **Tablelands Trail** departs from barren Trout River gulch (on Route 431, about 4km/2½ miles) west of the Woody Point Discovery Centre, then traces an old gravel road up to Winterhouse Brook Canyon. You can bushwhack along the rocky river a bit farther upstream, or turn back. It's about 2km (a mile and a quarter) each direction. This is a good trail to get a feel for the unique ecology of the Tablelands—look for signboards explaining the geology at both the trailhead and the roadside pull-off on your left before the trailhead. Allow 2 hours for it.

An easier walk, the **Stanleyville Trail,** begins from the day-use area near the Lomond campground (off Route 431) and goes up a ridge, through logging areas, and then down to a secluded cove where there was once a tiny harbor town (about a century ago), but no longer is. The round-trip is about 4km (2½ miles) in total, and it's only of moderate difficulty. Allow 2 hours.

Hard-core hikers, on the other hand, should check out the **Green Gardens Trail** ★★★. There are two trailheads to this loop, both of which are strenuous; don't attempt either one if you're not in shape. (Also, there are some very steep cliff edges just inches from your boots. If you don't like heights, don't go here.) The second loop—the one that begins closer to Trout River—is a better choice; you begin by trekking through a rolling, infertile landscape, then plunge down, down, down wooden steps and a steep trail toward the sea. The landscape grows more lush every moment, until you're walking through extraordinary coastal meadows on crumbling bluffs high above the churning surf. Take care to stay away from the very edge; these ancient rocks do occasionally crumble.

The trail then follows the shore northward for about 5 more kilometers (3 more miles)—perhaps one of the most breathtaking coastal trails in the world. In July, irises and other wildflowers bloom wildly. Then, of course, you have to climb back up where you came down from; carbo-load in advance.

The entire loop is about 16km (10 miles) in all, rugged, and very hilly; allow 5 or 6 hours for the hike. An abbreviated version involves walking clockwise on the loop to the shore's edge, then retracing one's steps back uphill. That's still about 9km (5½ miles), though, some of it quite steep—still quite a workout.

Camping

The two **drive-in campsites** in the southern section of Gros Morne—**Trout River Pond** and **Lomond**—have showers and hiking trails. Of the two, Trout River Pond is more dramatic, located on a plateau overlooking the pond; a short stroll brings you to pond's edge with wonderful views up along the fjord. Lomond is near the site of an old lumbering town, and is more popular with anglers fishing the lake. Camping costs C$19 to C$26 per night at each site, depending on the level of services you require at your site.

Three exceptional **backcountry campsites** are located along the Green Gardens Trail (see "Hikes & Walks," above); pre-registration at the park's visitor center is required before using these sites, and the fee is C$9.80 per night. The northernmost site in the trio is near the coast, in a ravine where Wallace Brook meets the ocean. The two southern sites are on grassy bluffs above pebble beaches, and have outstanding coastal views.

Reserving a site in advance is always a good idea. Do it through the national parks reservation website (**www.pccamping.ca**) or by calling ✆ **877/737-3783.**

The Tablelands: A Journey to the Center of the Earth

If you see folks wandering around the **Tablelands** ★★ looking twitchy and excited, they're probably either professional or amateur geologists. The Tablelands are one of the world's great geological celebrities, a popular destination among pilgrims who come to worship at the altar of classic rocks. Not rock 'n' roll. *Rocks.*

To the uninitiated, the Tablelands area—south of Woody Point and the southern arm of Bonne Bay—appears pretty bleak and barren. Muscular hills rise up, rounded and rust-colored, devoid of trees or, it seems, any vegetation at all. Up close, you discover just how barren they are: Little plant life really seems to have established a toehold here yet.

There's a reason for that. Some 570 million years ago, this rock was part of the earth's mantle—the part of the earth lying just beneath its crust. Riding on continental plates, two continental landmasses collided forcefully (though excruciatingly slowly; it was more like a fender-bender than an Indy 500 crash). This piece of mantle was driven up and over the crust, rather than being forced under (as is usually the case). Years of erosion followed, and what's left is a rare X-ray look at some of the earth's oldest bones. You are touching rocks that were part of this planet before there were *plants* on it, never mind people. Yes, really.

So why the bleak face? Well, this ancient rock turns out to be super-rich in magnesium . . . and that's a bad thing, plant-wise. Very few species of plant can survive in a soil with such a high concentration of this element, so the landscape here looks more like a Western desert landscape than part of the rainy mountains of Newfoundland. Old and stingy: Hey, it is what it is.

Where to Stay

Victorian Manor B&B This bright yellow, 1920s-era home is one of the most impressive in the village of Woody Point, though it's hardly extravagant—more solid than flamboyant, set in a residential neighborhood near the town's center and a few minutes' walk from the harbor. The attractive suite has its own whirlpool. If that's booked, ask about the efficiency units, which cost a bit more than inn rooms but afford greater convenience (they have full kitchens and private decks), especially considering the slim dining choices in town. The same local couple that owns this inn operates a good little local restaurant, the Seaside, in Trout River (see "Where to Dine," below).

Main Rd. (P.O. Box 165), Woody Point, NL A0K 1P0. ✆ **866/453-2485** or 709/453-2485. www.grosmorne.com/victorianmanor. 7 units (3 with shared bathroom). C$55–C$105 double and suite. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* TV (some units), fridge, Jacuzzi (1 unit), kitchenette (some units), no phone.

Where to Dine

Seaside Restaurant ★ SEAFOOD The Seaside has been a Trout River institution for years; it's a notch above the tired fare you often find in little coastal villages. This restaurant is polished without being swank, and it features magnificent harbor views. A piece of pan-fried cod is superb, as are a number of other seafood dishes such as steamed lobster and pan-fried scallops. (Sandwiches and burgers are also on the menu, for those

who can't or don't do seafood.) Desserts are good, too; try the parfait, made from local berries, if it's on the menu.

Main St., Trout River. ✆ **709/451-3461.** Main courses C$10–C$19. MC, V. Daily noon–10pm. Closed mid-Oct to mid-May.

GROS MORNE'S NORTHERN SECTION ★★

Gros Morne's northern section flanks Route 430 for some 72km (45 miles) between Wiltondale and St. Paul's. The road winds through abrupt, forested hills south of Rocky Harbour; beyond, the road finally levels out, following a broad coastal plain covered mostly with bog and "tuckamore" (Newfie translation: clumps of stunted trees and shrubs). East of this plain rises the extraordinarily dramatic monoliths of the **Long Range.** This section contains the park's main **visitor center** (see above), as well as its one must-see attraction: **Western Brook Pond** ★★★.

The hardscrabble fishing village of **Rocky Harbour** is your best bet for tourist services, including motels, B&Bs, Laundromats, and the like. One caveat: This area lacks a good, big grocery store or supply depot of the sort you might expect to be located near a big national park of such international significance. What you'll find instead are a few modest grocers. Adjust your culinary radar downward accordingly.

Exploring the Northern Section

If you have time for only one activity in Gros Morne—heaven forbid that's the case—make it a **BonTours boat trip** ★★★ (✆ **888/458-2016** or 709/458-2016; www.bontours.ca) up **Western Brook Pond.** It's not just a boat trip: It's an adventure. The trip begins with a 20-minute drive north from Rocky Harbour. You park at the pond's trailhead, then set off on an easy 3km (2-mile), 45-minute hike across the northern coastal plain, with interpretive signs explaining the wildlife and bog ecology you'll see along the way. (Keep an eye out for moose!) Ahead, the mighty monoliths of the Long Range rise high above, inviting and mystical, like a scene from *Highlander* (or something). Finally you arrive at the pond's edge and the dock.

On board, you head directly toward these intimidating mountains, threading your way among the sheer rock faces that distinguish the fjord. You'll learn about the glacial geology and the remarkable quality of the water, which is considered among the purest in the world. Bring plenty of film and a good wide-angle lens.

The trip departs from June through September, three or more times daily in peak summer months but just once per day in June and September. In all, the boat portion lasts about 2½ hours and costs C$48 for adults, C$23 for children age 12 to 16, C$19 for children 11 and under, or C$115 for a family of four. ***Note:*** They only take cash; no credit cards accepted, so stock up at an ATM before you get here. Buy tickets for the tour right at the dock or at the Ocean View Motel in Rocky Harbour. (Also note that you must have purchased a **park admissions pass** before arrival to take this tour; see "Essentials," above, for details.)

If rain or heavy fog puts a damper on outdoor activities, there's a modern indoor pool at the **Gros Morne Recreation Complex** (✆ **709/458-2350** or 458-3605) on Route 430 high above Rocky Harbour. It's open to nonresidents in July and August only, 9am until 9pm. The view of Bonne Bay from the outdoor terrace is great, and this is also a good spot for a hot shower if you're staying at a campground without one. Tickets good for a 1-hour swim cost about C$3 for adults, C$2 for children.

If you're looking for diversion that requires minimal physical effort, the **SS *Ethie* shipwreck** and **Broom Point** ★, both near Western Brook Pond, are each worth stopping for.

The coastal steamer *Ethie* met its fate during a storm in 1919; all passengers were miraculously saved, including one infant who was shuttled to shore in a mailbag. The wreck was long prominent in local song and story, but the years have taken their toll on the rusting scrap metal. Today the hull is almost gone, leaving only the massive boiler and a few other stray parts; but the cobbles on the beach nearby are beautiful.

Broom Point is an easy stroll out to a rocky peninsula where fishing operations take place. Views from the point are outstanding; don't miss the superb sand beach down a side trail to your left as you walk toward the point. There's also a restored cabin and fishing hut, with interpreters on site to explain the point's history from mid-May through mid-October.

HIKES & WALKS Heavy-duty hikers rejoice: **Gros Morne Mountain** ★★ is Gros Morne's version of Everest. At almost 800m (2,602 ft.), it's the tallest (and most demanding) peak in the park. What makes it so challenging isn't just the height or the length (about 16km/10 miles round-trip as a hike). It's the terrain. You need to expend considerable energy scrambling over loose scree on the upper reaches (bring some seriously tough leather boots; sneakers are a bad idea). But the views of the bay and beyond to the Gulf of St. Lawrence are well worth the effort—if the weather cooperates. Allow about 7 or 8 hours for the entire excursion, and pack in plenty of food and water.

Not sure? You can read about this hike in a trail brochure at the information center. While you're there, check on the trail's status: the final stretch is sometimes closed until as late as July due to late snows, saturated ground, or wildlife raising their young on the summit. And if you're traveling with a pet, note that this is the one trail in Gros Morne in which dogs *aren't* allowed. (Not that any sane dog would want to make this climb anyway.) A warm coat and waterproof gear in your pack aren't bad ideas, either. This hike is for experts only.

There's a very simple backcountry **campsite** at Ferry Gulch (on the mountain's eastern flank) with space for three tents—campfires aren't allowed.

Of course, there are plenty of easier walks in Gros Morne, too. Even if you're not planning on signing up for the Western Brook Pond boat tour, you owe yourself a walk to the pond's wharf and possibly beyond. The 45-minute one-way trek from a parking lot north of **Sally's Cove** follows a well-trod trail and boardwalk through bogs and boreal forest. When you arrive at the wharf, the **view** ★★ to the mouth of the fjord will just about take your breath away. A well-executed outdoor exhibit explains how glaciers shaped the dramatic landscape in front of you.

Two spur trails continue on either side of the pond for a short distance. The **Snug Harbour Trail** ★★ follows the northern shore to a primitive campsite (registration required) and it's worth the jaunt, though you'll have to cross Western Brook (bring waterproof footgear and expect to get wet). After crossing the pond outlet, you pass through scrubby woods before emerging on a long, wonderful sand and pebble beach. This is a great destination for an afternoon picnic. The hike all the way to Snug Harbour is about 8km (5 miles) each direction. Allow 2½ hours.

Three easy but enjoyable strolls depart from the **Berry Hill Campground,** on Route 430 about 5km (3 miles) north of Rocky Harbour. The 1.6km-or-so (1 mile) **Berry Hill Pond Trail** is a little loop where you can walk off a meal in the evening; it takes less than an hour. The 1.6km (mile-long) hike up and back down **Berry Hill** ★ is almost as short, but there's a steep set of stairs at the end; if you're easily winded, you might want to skip this one, but a short trail around the summit affords excellent views. If you examine the rocks you can see signs of the ancient ocean that once covered these rocks. It takes an

hour. Also departing from the same parking lot is the longer **Baker's Brook Falls Trail,** a fairly level walk of about 5km (3 miles) ending at a river and a wooden platform looking down on some tumultuous, wild cascades. The trail crosses big stretches of bog via boardwalks, and goes through forest for much of its length; use bug spray. Because of the distance (10km/6 miles round-trip), it takes 2 to 3 hours to do.

CAMPING The northern section has three campgrounds open to car campers. The main campground is at **Berry Hill,** a few kilometers north of Rocky Harbour. There are almost 150 drive-in sites, plus a handful more walk-in sites on the shores of the pond itself. This one is best for families: It's just 10 minutes' drive from the visitor center, where evening activities and presentations are held, and several easy-to-moderately difficult walks depart from the campground's parking lot (see "Hikes & Walks," above).

The campground at **Shallow Bay** ★ takes longer to reach, but is prettier: it's 48km (30 miles) past Rocky Harbour, just off Route 430 near the hamlet of **Cow Head.** It has 50 campsites near the park's northern border, beside an appealing, 3km (2-mile-long) sandy beach. Both these campgrounds have showers and flush toilets; sites cost C$19 to C$26 per night, depending on the time of year and level of services (electricity, water, and so forth) you require.

Finally, **Green Point** ★★ is a cheaper, more intimate, simpler campground with only 18 sites, about 11km (7 miles) north of Rocky Harbour on Route 430. This is a "primitive" campsite; there are showers, yes, but only pit toilets (no flush toilets). Nevertheless, it's incredibly popular. The campground is divided into two sections: an upper area (more open, with better views of the gulf) and a lower area set amid the evergreens (which offers more privacy and better shelter from the wind). Choose whichever style you prefer; sites in either section cost C$16 per night.

In midsummer, these three campgrounds fill up fast; it's best to arrive as soon after the daily 2pm checkout time as possible to snag a site. Of course, **reservations** are very helpful for all three during peak summer months. As usual, to reserve a campsite in advance go online to the national parks reservation service at **www.pccamping.ca** or call the service at ✆ **877/737-3783.**

WILDERNESS HIKING If you're a serious hiker with compass skills, there's an unforgettable—also serious and demanding—adventure in this park. Ask at the visitor center about backpacking trips along the glorious **Long Range** ★★★ and **North Rim** ★★. On both of these trips, you strike out cross-country, bushwhacking through the high subarctic terrain among foggy mountains, stunning views, herds of caribou, and bears; there are *no* marked trails here, and no guides accompany you. The hikes require 2 to 5 nights each to complete. To do them, you need to be in very good physical condition and well-versed in backcountry skills, including proficiency with maps and compasses (which you will have to demonstrate during a brief pre-trip orientation meeting at the park's visitor center). There's a nonrefundable C$25 fee charged to reserve a hike, plus an activity fee of about C$70 to C$85 per person (C$125 for both trails). That fee includes required rental of a small GPS device (to pinpoint your location for rescuers, in case you get lost or hurt) and your fees for camping in the bush.

Which one's better? The Long Range is about 32km (20 miles) of walking in all, which takes 4 to 5 days and offers more spectacular views; the North Rim hike is shorter (about 24km/15 miles long), but still wonderful and takes 3 tough days because of the dense tuckamore (thickets) you have to constantly struggle through. You can do the hikes anytime from July through mid-October, weather permitting, but you can't take more than three tents or nine people in a group. Bring broken-in boots, warm- and wet-weather gear, and

More Than One Park? I'll Take a (Viking) Pass

If you're planning to visit Gros Morne, and then another one (or more) of the province's "Big Seven" sites into your trip within a week's time—the other six being L'Anse aux Meadows, Red Bay, Port au Choix, and the two **Grenfell Historic Properties** in **St. Anthony**—pick up a **Viking Trail Pass** at any of those parks' offices. Valid for 7 days from date of issue, the pass gives you unlimited admission to all 7 sites for one flat fee. It costs C$44 per adult, C$36 for seniors, C$22 for children, and C$88 for a family of four.

1:50000 topographical maps (available in Rocky Harbour). Don't hike on days when it's very foggy; hunker down and wait for the weather to clear. Call ✆ **709/458-2417** for more information about these hikes.

Where to Stay

Rocky Harbour has more tourist services than any other village in or around the park, yet it's still pretty small and has trouble handling the annual torrent of travelers in July and August. Two or three bus tours can pretty well fill up the town, as can droves of sudden overnight arrivals during a spell of exceptionally good weather. So it's unwise to arrive here without a reservation.

The biggest motel in town is the **Ocean View Motel** (✆ **800/563-9887** or 709/458-2730), on the harbor at 38 Main St. It has pretty basic rooms (some with small balconies and excellent bay views; ask for one on the sea side when booking). The place is popular with bus tours and often fills early in the day, so try to book ahead. This is also the place where you book BonTours (see above) boat tours. Rooms are about C$125 to C$155 for a double in high season, though the hotel is slowly trying to remake itself into a fancier place and they may change in future seasons.

There's also the motel-like **Fisherman's Landing Inn** ★★ (✆ **866/458-2711** or 709/458-2711), with 40 rooms and 2 suites—all of them air-conditioned and equipped with amenities such as coffeemakers, ironing boards, and hair dryers. There's an outdoor hot tub and guest laundry, and a family restaurant of the same name attached, but few ocean views despite the name.

Gros Morne Cabins ★★ (Kids) The best thing about friendly Gros Morne Cabins? It might be pulling up and seeing long lines of freshly laundered sheets billowing in the sea breeze. Two dozen trim and tidy log cabins cluster along a grassy rise overlooking the village of Rocky Harbour, and all have outstanding views out toward the attractive Lobster Cove Head lighthouse. Inside, the one- and two-bedroom cabins are newish and clean, sporting good televisions and excellent Wi-Fi access. Each is equipped with a kitchenette, while gas barbecues are scattered about the property; one cabin even has a Jacuzzi. The complex also includes a general store (stocked with wool sweaters, groceries, souvenirs, postcards) and a guest laundry. Best of all, it's open year-round.

Main St. (P.O. Box 151), Rocky Harbour, NL A0K 4N0. ✆ **888/603-2020** or 709/458-2020. Fax 709/458-2882. 25 units. C$99–C$179 double. AE, DC, MC, V. Pets allowed. *In room:* TV, fridge, Jacuzzi (1 unit), kitchenette, no phone.

Sugar Hill Inn ★★ When this appealing green-shingled inn opened in 1992 on the road between Rocky Harbour and Norris Point, it was already a cute little place with

three rooms, a woody setting, and great food and wine. But the inn didn't stand pat; it has, instead, grown to ten rooms (plus a cottage) over the years, and is now one of the better lodging choices in this area. The units are quite comfortable, if a bit condolike, with nice design touches throughout such as hardwood floors (in 8 of the 10), lots of natural wood trim, French doors, cathedral ceilings, well-selected furniture, phones, cable television, and a shared sauna and hot tub in the cedar-lined common room. An upstairs sitting room is spacious and bright, with a fireplace and modern furnishings; it's a good spot to swap local adventure ideas with other guests. The cottage has a queen bed and Jacuzzi, one of only two units that has one. The inn's lovely dining room, open daily, is highly recommended for dinner (see "Where to Dine," below), and the inn itself is open year-round—helpful if you're visiting the park off-season.

115–129 Sexton Rd. (P.O. Box 100), Norris Point, NL A0K 3V0. ✆ **888/299-2147** or 709/458-2147. Fax 709/458-2166. www.sugarhillinn.nf.ca. 11 units. C$115–C$215 double and suite. Rates include continental breakfast. Packages available. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; Jacuzzi; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units), Jacuzzi (some units).

Wild Flowers Bed and Breakfast ★ This 80-year-old home near Rocky Harbour's village center was modernized and updated with a casual country look before it opened as a B&B in 1997. Rooms here are tastefully appointed (wood paneling, floral wallpapers, chintz curtains), if a bit small, though two newer rooms have private bathrooms and are a bit bigger; they remind you of the room you grew up in, rather than a hotel. The neighborhood isn't all that scenic (there's an auto repair shop across the street), but the house is peaceful and the innkeepers are very friendly. It's a great choice for those seeking reasonably priced lodging with a homey feel. Note that the owners are snowmobile enthusiasts, and sometimes lead wintertime excursions on the backs of the motorized beasts through the glorious (and gloriously tourist-free) park terrain.

Main St. N. (P.O. Box 291), Rocky Harbour, NL A0K 4N0. ✆ **888/811-7378** or 709/458-3000. Fax **709/458-3080.** www.wildflowerscountryinn.com. 6 units. C$89–C$129 double. Rates include full breakfast. Mid-Oct to May, open by special arrangement only. MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar. *In room:* TV, no phone.

Where to Dine

There are a few seafood joints, family restaurants, and pubs in town. But the best fancy food in these parts is at the **dining room ★★** of the **Sugar Hill Inn,** between Rocky Harbour and Norris Point (described above in "Where to Stay"). Its menu features lots of local seafood, homemade desserts, an excellent wine list, and water from the inn's own well; the bright room is comfortable, too, with its leather chairs and pine floor and ceiling. It's open to the public nightly from 6 to 8:30pm, and they take reservations.

5 THE GREAT NORTHERN PENINSULA ★

On a map, the Great Northern Peninsula looks like a stout cudgel threatening the shores of Labrador. If Newfoundland can be said to have a beaten track (I wouldn't say that, but it does get a lot busier in summer), rest assured that this peninsula is way, way off that track. It's not nearly as mountainous or starkly dramatic as Gros Morne, but the road here unspools for miles through tuckamore and evergreen forests, along a coastline that kneels right at the feet of striking hills. There are few services here, and even fewer organized diversions. But it's got history in spades, a handful of scenic fishing villages clustering along its rocky coast, and some of the most unspoiled terrain you can drive to in

 North America. (The road here is in good condition, your chief hazard being the occasional stray moose or caribou—or, in spring, an infrequent polar bear wandering through, still hungry after a long trip south on an ice floe. Yes, really.)

Long story short: It's nice here. Really nice. And quiet—at-the-ends-of-the-Earth quiet.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Route 430, also known as the Viking Trail, departs the Trans-Canada Highway at Deer Lake and goes all the way north through empty landscapes to St. Anthony, a daunting drive of some 418km (260 miles, which could take you 10 to 11 hours to negotiate, stops not included, due to the elevation changes and rough roads).

You can shorten this slog by taking a flight to tiny **St. Anthony Airport** (happy airport code: YAY); the airport is on Route 430, about 32km (20 miles) west of St. Anthony. Rental cars are available at the airstrip; call ✆ **709/454-3192** for more info. **Provincial Airlines** (✆ **800/563-2800** from eastern Canada or 709/576-1666; www.provincialairlines.ca) flies in from St. John's.

VISITOR INFORMATION For information about the Great Northern Peninsula and the Viking Trail, contact the **Viking Trail Tourism Association,** P.O. Box 251, St. Anthony, NL A0K 4T0 (✆ **877/778-4546** or 709/454-8888; www.vikingtrail.org).

PORT AU CHOIX

A visit to **Port au Choix** (pronounced port-a-*schwa*) requires a short, 13km (8-mile) detour off the Viking Trail, about 193km (120 miles) north of Gros Morne's northern section (but it will take you something like 5 hours to get there from Gros Morne). The road travels out to a knobby peninsula that's home to a sizable fishing fleet. The windswept landscape overlooking the sea here is low, flat, grassy, and speckled with simple homes. The town's chief (only, really) attraction is the **Port au Choix historic site** (see below).

But if you're coming to town, also be sure to find the former archaeological excavations at **Philip's Garden** ★, an adjunct to the historic site. Reaching the garden requires a short hike (there are actually two separate trails, one of which involves 120 rather steep steps) over low limestone cliffs splashed with rust-orange lichens. It doesn't take much to imagine the ancient community of Dorset peoples who lived here 2,000 years ago, Eskimo-style—they hunted and skinned local harp seals for food and clothing, and ate berries and birds that still thrive here today. Just like the Maritime Archaic peoples before them, these Dorset disappeared from the area around 1,300 years ago, and nobody yet knows why; perhaps they migrated too far north with the seals as weather warmed and couldn't survive in a new environment.

Whatever the case, it's a fascinating little detour (you can even very faintly discern the outlines of their dwellings in the grass if you look hard enough). Ask for directions to the garden at the historic site's **visitor center.**

Port au Choix National Historic Site ★★ Kids Port au Choix's birth as a historic site is a funny story. In 1967, a local businessman digging the foundation for a new movie theater in this hamlet came upon some bones. A lot of bones. This turned out to be a huge burial ground for the people known as the Maritime Archaic Indians, a group that hunted and fished ingeniously here for thousands of years beginning around 5,500 B.C. (Among the artifacts recovered are slate spears and antler harpoon tips that featured an ingenious toggle extending into the fish as a sort of delayed-action mechanism after

first being thrust into the fish.) One of the enduring historical mysteries in Canada is the rather sudden disappearance of these people from the province about 3,500 years ago; no one can yet explain their abrupt departure. You'll learn about this mystery at the modern visitor center, where staff here also direct you to the original burial ground (now surrounded by village homes) and Philip's Garden (see above). You can also visit the nearby **Port Riche Lighthouse,** past Phillip's Garden, scenically located on a blustery point thrusting into the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Point Riche Rd., Port au Choix. ✆ **709/861-3522.** Admission C$7.80 adults, C$6.55 seniors, C$3.90 children 6–16, C$20 families. Visitor center open June to Sept daily 9am–6pm.

L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS ★★★

Newfoundland's northernmost tip is not only exceptionally remote and dramatic, it's also one of the most historically significant archaeological sites in the world. A Viking encampment dating from A.D. 1000 was discovered here in 1960, and has been thoroughly documented by archaeologists since. An especially well-conceived and managed national historic site probes this earliest chapter in European expansion, and an afternoon spent here will definitely fire your imagination.

L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site ★★★ Value Kids Yes, there really is proof Vikings were in the Americas; never mind those Columbus stories of "discovery" you learned in elementary school. In the late 1950s, two determined archaeologists were poring over 13th-century Norse sagas searching for clues about where the Vikes might have landed in North America. Going on very little description, they began cruising the coastlines of Newfoundland and Labrador, asking locals about any unusual hummocks and mounds. And in 1960, they finally struck gold at this remote cove of low, grassy hills. Here they found the remains of an ancient Norse encampment that included three large halls and a forge where crude nails were made from local iron; today it's one of eastern Canada's major tourist attractions.

See Viking artifacts in the visitor center and watch the orientation video, then sign up for a free guided tour of the site; the guides offer considerably more information than the simple markers around the grounds do. Near the original encampment, several sod-and-timber buildings have been recreated to depict life here a thousand years ago. Costumed interpreters act out characters and answer questions while demonstrating textile-making, woodworking, blacksmithing, and other skills. (They also sometimes cook bread on a stick for visitors (hey, this is how the Vikings rolled). Stick around for at least a couple hours or a half-day and soak it all up with the family.

Rte. 436, L'Anse aux Meadows. ✆ **709/623-2608.** Admission C$12 adults, C$10 seniors, C$5.80 children 6–16, C$29 families. June to Sept open daily 9am–8pm; rest of the year, call ahead for open status.

ST. ANTHONY ★

The seaport town of **St. Anthony** was first noted by the famed explorer Jacques Cartier, who came across a settlement of French and Basque fishermen here in 1534 (the town's name might have come from them, not him).

Today, with just 2,700 residents (and dropping), St. Anthony is nevertheless the northern peninsula's largest town and its undisputed commercial center. It's the place to restock with basic supplies or secure a motel room for day trips to L'Anse aux Meadows (see above), which is about 48km (30 miles) north of here, or to grab a boat tour of the surrounding waters—part of what's known locally as Iceberg Alley. There are also a few historical attractions in the town to waylay you a bit longer.

It was a Frommer's reader who tipped me off to **Northland Discovery Boat Tours** (✆ **877/632-3747** or 709/454-3092; www.discovernorthland.com). Paul Alcock uses his family's fishing boat (idled by the dwindling local fisheries), the 15m (48-ft.) *Gaffer III,* to give travelers a local's-eye view of the local landscape. The 2½-hour tour might take in everything from humpback whales and dolphins to eagles, massive icebergs, and rare Arctic terns. You might even enter a cave or sample the unique taste of an iceberg's ice. Departing from the dock just behind the Grenfell complex (see below), the tours run three times daily from mid-May through late September. They cost C$50 per adult, C$25 per child age 13 to 17, C$20 per child age 5 to 12, and C$8 per child children age 2 to 4.

If you don't have the time for a full tour, head out to **Fishing Point Park** ★★ at the end of a dirt road at the mouth of the harbor, a remote point with stunning little views. With the right timing and luck, you can view icebergs and whales from the rugged, rocky bluffs here and never leave land. Cold and windy? Grab a bite at the park's cafe (see "Where to Stay & Dine," below) and use the cafe's binoculars to ogle in safety.

Back in town, you can also visit **Tea House Hill** ★, where local hero Wilfred Grenfell is buried (see below), in about 20 minutes or so; it has splendid bay views.

The town has one super-corny attraction, which feeds off the Viking-tourism frenzy. That's the live entertainment at the **Great Viking Feast Dinner Theatre at Leifsburdur** (✆ **877/454-4900** or 709/454-4900). Inside a replica sod hut—the "only sod-covered restaurant in North America," a dubious distinction if there ever was one—up to 85 diners feast on Jigg's dinner (boiled meat and potatoes), moose stew (yes, really), cod tongues, and baked cod, all while being amused by a crew of boisterous faux Vikings. The show is staged nightly from July through early September (reservations required), and costs about C$35 per person. Corny, hokey? Sure is. Filling and unusual? That, too.

Grenfell House Museum and Interpretation Centre ★★

Dr. Wilfred Grenfell is more or less the patron saint of St. Anthony. A devout Christian, he was born in England and provided medical care to North Sea fishermen. In 1892, he visited Newfoundland and Labrador; appalled by the conditions, he founded the first hospital here and spent much of the rest of his life ministering to residents of remote outports and agitating for better services from the government. In 1912, he established the International Grenfell Association, which built hospitals and nursing homes throughout the region. Grenfell was relentless in trying to improve the lot of the northland's residents and the delivery of medicines and services.

The interpretive center features two floors of exhibits that nicely fill visitors in on his life and works. Afterward, tour the handsome green home that grateful townspeople built for Grenfell and his wife in 1910; it's furnished with numerous artifacts and exhibits. Among other interesting things, you learn about Grenfell cloth—a versatile fabric, invented in 1922, of Egyptian cotton specifically woven to withstand the rigors of winter travel. Garments made of Grenfell cloth are available at **Grenfell Handicrafts,** in the interpretation center.

West St., St. Anthony (across from the hospital). ✆ **709/454-4010.** Admission C$6 adults, C$5 seniors, C$2.75 children 6–16, C$12 families. May–Sept daily 9am–8pm (Sept until 5pm).

Where to Stay & Dine

Lightkeeper's Seafood Restaurant ★

SEAFOOD Located at scenic Fishing Point Park, this cafe with the amazing view is housed in a simple but handsome white building with fire-engine-red trim overlooking the ocean—yes, the lighthouse keeper

used to live here. Inside, it's as sparely decorated as you'd expect, yet flooded with natural light. You can't beat the panoramic scenery, and the proprietors have helpfully placed binoculars on the windowsills so that you can scope out whales and icebergs while waiting for your meal to arrive at the table. Entrees are standard but well prepared: cod, cod tongue, steaks, burgers, ribs, seafood chowder, and the like.

Fishing Point Park. ✆ **877/454-4900** or 709/454-4900. Reservations not accepted. Main courses C$8–C$22. AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–9pm. Closed Nov–May.

Tickle Inn at Cape Onion ★ (Finds) This is the Newfoundland of postcards and dreams. About an hour's pleasant drive from L'Anse aux Meadows (though less than 5 miles away as the crow flies), the family-owned Tickle Inn is set on a very remote cove at the end of a road near Newfoundland's northernmost point; you can see Labrador right across the straits. It's a handsome fisherman's home on a green lawn, built by the great-grandfather of the current innkeeper in 1890. The home has been expertly restored; its rooms are small and simply furnished but comfortable, even if they all share three communal bathrooms. Snacks and complimentary cocktails are offered in a parlor before dinners in the **dining room** ★ each evening. (Your only other option for food is to drive a considerable distance to the nearest restaurant.) The meals are good, featuring local ingredients: Cape Onion soup, paella with local seafood, or flan with local berries, for example. A major highlight here is the small but superb network of hiking trails maintained by the inn; they ascend open bluffs to amazing views of the Straits. The inn is open from June through the end of September, and is a more scenic L'Anse aux Meadows base than downtown St. Anthony.

R.R. 1 (Box 62), Cape Onion, NL A0K 4J0. ✆ **866/814-8567** or 709/452-4321. Fax 709/452-2030. www.tickleinn.net. 4 units (all with shared bathrooms). C$65–C$85 double. Rates include deluxe continental breakfast. MC, V. Closed Oct–May. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* No phone.

6 CENTRAL NEWFOUNDLAND

Spruce. Larch. Spruce. Bog. Spruce. Lake. Spruce. Bog.

The 320km (200 miles) of Trans-Canada Highway stretching through the heart of Newfoundland island are long and tedious, and travelers crossing this interior have been known to spend as much time cursing slow-moving RVs as admiring the scenery. This is widely regarded as an area to pass through as quickly as possible en route to the province's "star" areas, rather than one in which to linger. Still, you've gotta eat, sleep, stretch, and refuel.

Grand Falls-Windsor and **Gander** are the regional service centers along this lonesome highway, decent stopping points for stretching your legs, taking in an attraction or two, gassing up the rig, getting a bite to eat, and perhaps spending a night if evening is near. But neither town offers much else for travelers.

The area around **Twillingate** ★★ is a distinct exception—it's well worth the 2- to 2½-hour detour north off the Trans-Canada Highway and could easily occupy a traveler who enjoys low-key, off-the-beaten-path destinations. There are few places to stay in Twillingate, however—and remember that it's 2 to 2½ *more* hours just to get back to the main highway. Include the town only if you'll be in the province for awhile.

GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR

Roughly halfway between St. John's and Port aux Basques, the settlement of **Grand Falls** is actually quite young. It dates only from 1903, when two British tycoons grew concerned

that Germany might disrupt the supply of newsprint for their newspaper business. They searched high and higher until they found Grand Falls, where the Exploits River rushes over cascades in the middle of a seemingly endless supply of timber. A huge paper mill was constructed on the banks of the river in 1909, along with a company town and all the associated services, and the mill continued to expand for decades. The town of **Windsor** joined Grand Falls at the hip in 1991, resulting in the ungainly name and a total metro population of about 13,000.

However, the town was dealt a serious blow in late 2008, when Abitibi-Bowater, owners of the mill, shuttered it for good in a teetering economy, unable to reach a deal with the millworkers' union. The town's future may be in jeopardy, though tourist-related services (gas stations, restaurants, motels) likely will continue to thrive.

As for practical matters, it's a bit of a pain to get from one town over to the other, because the Trans-Canada Highway cuts them off from each other. There's really little need to venture over to Windsor, though; focus on Grand Falls, which is south of the highway and has all the services you'll need.

Exploring Grand Falls-Windsor

The **Salmonid Interpretation Centre** (✆ **709/489-7350;** www.exploitsriver.ca), across the river from the mill, is a good little detour. Finding the place is a bit of a trick, but the center is more interesting than you might think. Not only will you get a good view of the rocky gorge through which the river tumbles, but you can also watch Atlantic salmon laboring up the fish ladder—which is not a "ladder" in the conventional sense, but rather a series of concrete pools linked by short waterfalls that leads to a holding tank. The fish are counted before one final gate is opened and they continue their upstream journeys unhindered. Inside, you descend to an observation area below to watch the salmon through aquariumlike walls. The fish are surprisingly majestic, though the exhibits themselves are a bit dull. The restaurant here offers basic and reasonably priced meals.

The center is open mid-June to mid-September daily from 8am to 8pm. Admission is C$3 adults, C$2 for seniors and children.

Back across the river in Grand Falls is the **Mary March Regional Museum** at 24 St. Catherine St. (✆ **709/292-4522**). It honors a Beothuk Indian who was captured in 1819 at Red Indian Lake; she died of tuberculosis after a year in captivity. The museum also describes Newfoundland's 5,000 years of inhabitation, from early Maritime Archaic Indians on through the Paleo-Eskimo, Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, and (eventually) Europeans. Intriguing artifacts such as ancient stone gouges and the geometrically incised game pieces and pendants of the Beothuk are displayed. The museum also offers a perspective on the local pulp and paper industry, and the coming of the railway. It's open from late April through mid-October, daily from 9am to 4:45pm. Admission is C$2.50 adults, free for visitors under 18.

Where to Stay & Dine

The simple brick **Mount Peyton Hotel** (✆ **800/563-4894** or 709/489-2251; www.mountpeyton.com) is the town's largest hotel and motel. Take your pick: The seasonal motel is on the north side of the Trans-Canada Highway, while the year-round hotel is on the south side. All the hotel rooms are air-conditioned, and it's a good enough option. You might prefer the slower pace of the Hotel Robin Hood (see below), though; the Mount Peyton can get noisy with highway noise, believe it or not, and sometimes bustles with meetings or conferences. Double rooms can range from C$87 all the way up to C$250.

Hotel Robin Hood This basic, family-owned hotel is in a quiet area between the residential and commercial neighborhoods of Grand Falls. The building was constructed in 1997 and has been well maintained; all the rooms here are larger than your standard-issue motel unit, and rooms on the second floor are even slightly bigger than those on the first. It's the hotel closest to the salmon interpretation center (see "Exploring Grand Falls-Windsor," above). Done in beadboard wainscoting, the in-house **restaurant** serves dinners and lunches of fish and chips, chops, salmon, and steak.

78 Linc oln Rd ., Grand F alls-Windsor, NL A2A 1N2. ✆ **709/489-5324.** F ax 709/489-6191. w ww.hotel robinhood.com. 22 units . C$90–C$120 double. Rates include c ontinental br eakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Pets allowed. **Amenities:** Restaurant; room service. *In room:* A/C, TV.

TWILLINGATE ★★

The scenic islands of North and South Twillingate are a photographer's dream. Here you'll find a little of everything that you came to Newfoundland for—historic fishing harbors, gently rolling forested ridges, jagged cliffs washed by surf, and open rocky barrens that roll down to the sea. There's also a pretty good chance of spotting whales and icebergs—quite a few of Greenland's icebergs seem to drift into Notre Dame Bay just west of here, where they can be spotted in late spring and early summer. It's worth the 4- to 5-hour round-trip detour if you've got a free day in Newfoundland.

The cute name comes via early French fishermen, who noted a striking resemblance between the rocky cliffs of this region and the stony shores of their hometown of Toulinguet (in Brittany). The spelling was later Anglicized.

On an archipelago linked by a series of causeways, the drive northward on **Route 340** ★ from Boyd's Cove follows inlets and harbors cropping up between the low, green, forested hills. The archipelago's central market town of **Twillingate** is a surprisingly active commercial center, with a population around 2,500 and a number of bustling stores lining the road down to the old harbor. It's been connected to the mainland by causeway since 1972.

And the communities surrounding Twillingate have shown some entrepreneurial drive, offering more services to travelers than you usually find in these tiny Newfoundland fishing villages. A number of local homes have been converted into serviceable B&Bs, and the route on to the two Twillingates is also lined with homemade billboards advertising boat tours, inns, restaurants, and the like.

Essentials

GETTING THERE Twillingate is 145km (90 miles) northeast of Grand Falls-Windsor. There are two turnoff points from the Trans-Canada Highway, depending on where you're coming from. From the west (Grand Falls, Port aux Basques, Gros Morne, or L'Anse aux Meadows), turn north on Route 340 about 48km (30 miles) east of Grand Falls-Windsor at Notre Dame Junction. It's about 96km (60 miles, or 2 hours) from the turnoff. Coming from the east (St. John's), you turn north on Route 330 at Gander, then take Route 331 to connect up with Route 340 at Boyd's Cove; it's about 112km (70 miles—but up to 2½ hours' driving) from Gander to Twillingate.

VISITOR INFORMA TION There's a **provincial visitor information center** (✆ **709/535-8547**) open seasonally (mid-May through the end of September) in **Notre Dame Junction,** one of the two turning-off points for Twillingate. There's also a smaller **regional VIC** (✆ **709/628-7454**) on Route 340 in **Newville**, about 13km (8 miles) before you reach Twillingate; it's usually open daily from May until early October.

Exploring Twillingate

As you reach Twillingate's harbor on Route 340, you'll arrive at a "T" intersection at Main Street. You can turn right or left; both directions merit exploration.

Turning left leads to the north island, **Long Point,** and the region's most prominent lighthouse. Along the way you'll pass the **Twillingate Museum & Craft Shop** (✆ **709/884-2825;** www.tmacs.ca) housed in a 1914 white clapboard building that was formerly the rectory of St. Peter's Anglican Church. Inside the handsome home you'll find displays of goods that might have been found in this community late in the 19th century, such as hooked rugs, cranberry glass, dolls, and fashions. There's also a display of local artifacts from the Maritime Indian culture and a display about Georgina Stirling, a local soprano who was once the toast of European opera houses (performing as Madame Toulinguet); she's buried nearby at St. Peter's Church, by the way. The museum houses a decent gift shop with a little selection of hand-knit sweaters, food products, and local history books. It's open daily from May through October, 9am to 8pm. There's a small admissions charge.

The road to Long Point passes through a few tiny communities before entering undeveloped barrens riven with coves and cliffs. **Seabreeze Municipal Park** (see "Where to Stay," below) has picnic tables and dramatic hiking trails along the cliffs. The rusted equipment in the meadows is from a short-lived copper mine that operated here briefly in the early 20th century, while the tracks of ancient lava flows in the cliff faces will interest rockhounds.

A few minutes' drive beyond the park is the **Long Point Lighthouse** ★, Twillingate's must-see destination. The red-and-white, milk bottle–shaped lighthouse, built in 1876, isn't open to the public but you can park along the cliffs and enjoy the sweeping views from these high headlands. (Unfortunately, antennae and microwave towers share the headland with the light, making it a poorer photo than you'd expect.) Whales and icebergs can often be spotted from this point.

Back in town, turning right at Twillingate's main intersection takes you on a winding road through clustered homes along the harbor's edge and onto the south island. In a mile or so you come to the **Auk Island Winery** (✆ **877/639-4637;** www.aukislandwinery.com), which has produced fruit wines here since 1998. Among the varieties available here are blueberry (the most popular), dogberry, gooseberry, partridgeberry, and strawberry-rhubarb wines. You might think they taste like Kool-Aid, but they don't. You can learn about the process and pick up bottles at the retail store; call ahead if you want to take a tour, as there's no set schedule but they can often accommodate you for a small charge.

Beyond the winery, the road slims down to one lane (be careful here) and passes through even more thinly populated areas en route to French Head (which rubs up against Burnt Island Tickle; yes, really), and some interesting **rock formations** that look like people and animals, before it finally ends. Ask locally about the **hiking trails** ★ that ascend hills and cliffs around here (you can buy a map in town); some offer stunning views and, in season, profuse berries for the picking. Just be sure to respect private property where posted.

Where to Stay

Camping is available in season at oddly named **Dildo Run Provincial Park** ★ (✆ **709/629-3350**) on Route 340 in Virgin Arm (again: yes, really) about 20 minutes south of Twillingate. This very nice park has 55 campsites, all recently upgraded; there are also about a dozen picnic tables with clean water and toilets right on the water. A

A 'Berg in the Hand Beats Two on the Web

There's nothing like *actually* seeing an iceberg, and Twillingate is famous for the number of icebergs that float into the area and run aground, providing a theatrical backdrop. Of course, it's a variable pleasure; some years are great for sighting icebergs, some aren't. Numerous factors conspire to determine if and when the 'bergs will show up, ranging from the thickness of sea ice in a given year to the prevailing direction of ocean currents to temperatures in the Arctic the previous year. (That's when glaciers in Greenland calve and produce the 'bergs that eventually float past Newfoundland the following spring.)

If icebergs are in the area, you should be able to spot them from the Long Point lighthouse or any of the other headlands or bays around Twillingate. Your best bet is to arrive in June or July, although the occasional stray 'berg has been spotted in August as well.

Of course, you get the best view of icebergs by taking a boat tour, two of which are offered right from Twillingate harbor. **Twillingate Island Boat Tours** (✆ **800/611-2374;** www.icebergtours.ca) has been operating since 1985. It's based out of the Iceberg Shop, painted with colorful murals of icebergs, at 50A Main St. (Turn right on Main St. when you enter Twillingate.) There are three cruises daily from May through September, taking about 2 hours each. Also offering tours is Captain Perry Young's **Twillingate Adventure Tours** (✆ **888/447-8687** or 709/884-5999; www.daybreaktours.com), with a 40-passenger vessel. These 2-hour tours also run thrice daily, from mid-May to Labour Day; also inquire about sunset cruises, which depart when conditions are favorable. You might see anything from huge, wind-twisted shapes to tiny "growlers" spinning angrily (and audibly) in the current.

nicely maintained hiking trail winds along the remote coastline to **Black Head** (a hike of about an hour). Rates for camping are C$15 per night.

One of Newfoundland's most dramatically sited campgrounds is at **Seabreeze Municipal Park** ★, near the Long Point Lighthouse (see above). The park is aging and offers only primitive camping (no showers or bathrooms at all), but it's undeniably scenic: The sites are grassy and perched at the edge of soaring cliffs, and the sunsets can't be beat. The park is open from June through mid-October.

Anchor Inn Motel The Anchor Inn is a well-maintained motel just off the harbor. It was updated in 1995, and has been kept up well enough since. Don't expect fancy furnishing, though: Everything's boxy and bland, and rooms are standard units with chain-hotel furniture and decor. The best deals by far are the eight efficiency units in a separate building on a rise above the motel. They're larger and have small kitchens (you can buy fresh seafood in town and cook it yourself). Ask for a room with a harbor view. If you can't snag a room with a kitchen, there's a restaurant on the premises serving roast turkey, seafood casserole, chops, beef, and a surf-and-turf of fried seafood and steak.

Main St. (P.O. Box 550), Twillingate, NL A0G 4M0. ✆ **800/450-3950** or 709/884-2777. Fax 709/884-2326. www.anchorinnmotel.ca. 22 units. C$84 double. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* TV, kitchenette (some units).

Harbour Lights Inn B&B ★ (Value) This attractive home on a hill across the road from the harbor was built in the 19th century for a British customs collector. It has since been updated. Guest rooms are located on the upper two floors and have an airy, white-washed feel, a bit like Florida Keys bungalows—a neat trick in misty Newfoundland. The best units are the higher-priced room nos. 4 and 5, both of which have burnished pine floors and ceilings, nice in-room Jacuzzis, sitting areas, and wonderful views of the harbor. They're well worth the extra few loonies. The included breakfast here runs to a selection of cereals, omelets, baked goods, and pastries.

189 Main St. (P.O. Box 729), Twillingate, NL A0G 4M0. ✆ **877/884-2763** (from Newfoundland only) or 709/884-2763. w www.harbourlightsinn.com. 9 units . C$75– C$139 double . Rates include full br eakfast. MC, V. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer, Jacuzzi (2 units), no phone.

Where to Dine

Options for dining are still pretty limited in Twillingate, despite a growing influx of travelers; gourmet fare hasn't arrived here yet. The **Anchor Inn Motel**'s dining room (see above) is a decent family-style choice, while **R&J Restaurant** on Main Street (✆ **709/884-2212**) is a locals' favorite for its diner fare of pizza, sandwiches, fried fish, and the like. Finally, there's the **Harbourview Restaurant** (✆ **709/884-1616**), also on Main Street, which seems to be a slight favorite of travelers based on my informal polling.

GANDER

The name **Gander** (pop. 10,000) will be familiar to history buffs. In the 1930s—when this island was still a British colony, believe it or not—the British Air Ministry built an airfield here. As the closest fog-free spot to England, it was envisioned as a future key link in transcontinental air traffic. And when World War II broke out less than a decade later, the base suddenly took on importance of a different kind: as the staging area and refueling depot for North American troops and supplies heading overseas. After the war, the airstrip became a familiar sight to a generation of groggy tourists headed for Europe, as planes stopped here for refueling before or after making the leap across the Atlantic.

But aircraft technology was changing too quickly, and the Boeing 707—which could cross the Atlantic from New York to Europe in a single bound—diminished Gander's importance in a single stroke. Today the airfield is a shadow of its former self, except during emergencies: During the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S., Gander suddenly found itself home to 39 airliners carrying 6,000 passengers and crew, who stayed 3 days in locals' homes while the planes were grounded, depending completely on the generosity of residents.

Today Gander's airport still sees a fair amount of commercial traffic (especially when St. John's is fogged in), but its Trans-Canada Highway gas stations are now usually the only thing travelers see of the place before resuming their journeys east or west across the island. There's some nice coastline in the area; a decent aviation museum; and friendly locals. Plus, the town's streets are named for famous flyers, and an annual Festival of Flight brings planes and aviation buffs to town. Whether that's reason enough to veer off your itinerary, well, you decide.

A **visitor information center** (✆ **709/256-7110**), open from 9am to 9pm in summer and 9am to 5pm the rest of the year, is well marked on the south side of the Trans-Canada Highway (next to the Aviation Museum and across from the Albatross Motel) as you drive through town.

Also be sure to check out the local weekly newspaper, *The Beacon*. The print edition's look is faithfully preserved in the online version of the paper (www.ganderbeacon.ca); it's a fascinating glimpse into small-town life on The Rock.

Exploring Gander

The Trans-Canada Highway skirts the southern edge of the downtown, which isn't really worth a detour. This commercial center is mostly a cluster of cheerless shopping plazas and fast-food joints, a place to stock up on supplies on the way to Twillingate or Terra Nova National Park. The hotels, restaurants, and gas stations are situated on the Trans-Canada Highway.

You'll also find the **North Atlantic Aviation Museum** (✆ **709/256-2923;** www.naam.ca) on the Trans-Canada. In fact, you can't miss it—it's the hangarlike building with the butt-end of a plane sticking out of the side. A couple of historic planes can be viewed on the grounds, including a Tiger Moth and a handsome firefighting plane. With its emphasis on aviation arcana, this museum is chiefly of interest only to confirmed airplane buffs. It's open from 9am to 6pm daily in season (the season varies each year). The cost is C$5 for adults, C$4 for seniors or children age 5 to 15, and C$16 for families.

Just east of town, look for a sign directing you to the poignant **Silent Witness Memorial** ★★ above Gander Lake. This memorial marks the site where a cargo plane carrying members of the U.S. 101st Airborne home for Christmas went down shortly after takeoff in December of 1985—a report later concluded icing on the wings probably caused the crash, but the report was not conclusive. The plane was returning from a peacekeeping mission in the Middle East; all 256 on board were killed—still the worst aviation disaster ever on Canadian soil. The breathtaking view of the lake from the crash site, as well as the heart-tugging sculpture of a serviceman holding hands with two young children, makes visiting this memorial an especially bittersweet experience.

Where to Stay & Dine

Good food and interesting beds are both very thin on the ground here. Three big hotel-motels on or near the Trans-Canada Highway offer the easiest-to-book accommodations, though none of them will win any personality awards.

The largest, the **Hotel Gander** (✆ **800/563-2988** or 709/256-3931), has about 150 rooms in an aviation theme; a small indoor pool; modest fitness facilities; and a chain hotel-style family restaurant serving traditional Newfoundland specialties and a kids' menu. Room rates start from around C$89 and ascend to about C$129. Nearby, the **Albatross Motel** (✆ **800/563-4900** in Canada or 709/256-3956) has about a hundred modern rooms and a ground-floor restaurant and cocktail lounge. It's a basic place, nothing special. Prices go from C$82 up to C$165for a double room.

A third option is **Sinbad's Hotel and Suites** (✆ **800/563-8330** or 709/651-2678) on Bennett Drive off the highway, a 100-plus-room property with suites and a serviceable dining room. The comedian/actor Sinbad is not a partner, so far as I can tell. Room rates generally range from around C$84 up to C$162 for a double room or suite.

7 TERRA NOVA NATIONAL PARK ★

Travelers to Newfoundland rave about Gros Morne National Park, but there's serious radio silence about the province's only other national park, **Terra Nova,** on the island's eastern shore perhaps three-quarters of the way from Port aux Basques to St. John's.

There's a reason why it's not talked about so often; words like *dramatic* and *grandeur* don't really describe the place. Instead, this is a pleasant park with acres and acres of boreal forest, coastal landscape, and low, rolling hills: more pastoral than jaw-dropping.

So the terra, however nova it is, isn't likely to take your breath away, with one possible exception: the cliffs and hills at the mouth of **Newman Sound.** More than likely, a visit here will simply leave you soothed and relaxed.

Activities and facilities at Terra Nova have mostly been designed with families in mind. There's always something going on, whether it's games with starfish at the interpretation center or movies in the park's main campground. Terra Nova also has a fine "junior naturalist" program, and many of the hikes here are of just the right length for younger kids to handle; there's also a relatively warm swimming area at **Sandy Pond.**

If your goal is to put some distance between yourself and the masses of RVs headed for St. John's, head for the backcountry section of this park. A number of campsites here are only accessible by foot, canoe, or ferry; once there, you'll be able to scout for bald eagles and shooting stars in complete silence.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Terra Nova is located on the Trans-Canada Highway. It's about 233km (145 miles, or 2½ hours' driving) from St. John's, about 612km (380 miles—perhaps 7½ hours' driving) from Port aux Basques.

VISITOR INFORMATION The **Visitor Centre** (✆ **709/533-2801**) at the Salton's Brook Day-Use Area, about 5km (3 miles) north of the Newman Sound campground, is your information pickup point. It's open daily from mid-May through mid-October. (Both campgrounds in the park also have small kiosks for registration, stocked with much less information and without the great exhibits the visitor center has.)

FEES A park entry fee is required of all visitors, even those just overnighting at a park campground. Fees are C$5.80 per day adults, C$4.90 seniors, C$2.90 children 6 to 16, and C$15 families. Annual passes are available for about C$29 per adult or C$74 per family.

EXPLORING THE PARK

A trip to the park should begin with a visit to the spiffy, modern **Visitor Centre** ★ (see "Visitor Information," above). It's located on a scenic part of the sound, among green hills; from here, the sound looks suspiciously like a lake except for the ocean-salted sailboats tied up at the wharf.

The center has a handful of exhibits focusing on local marine life, many of them geared toward kids. There's a "touch tank" where you can scoop up starfish and other aquatic denizens, and informative displays on underwater life. The underwater video monitor is especially nifty: It allows you to check out the action under the adjacent wharf with a joystick and zoom-in controls. There's also a wet lab, where you can conduct simple "experiments" under the watch of a park naturalist. The center is free with your paid park admission. You'll also find a snack bar and gift shop here.

Check with the ranger on duty to discuss your options in exploring the park. Staff can point you in the right direction, whether your interests are in soft adventure or in heading out to the backcountry.

HIKING & BOATING

The park has more than 97km (60 miles) of **hiking trails;** the booklet you receive when you pay your entrance fee offers descriptions of them. Some are fairly easy treks of an hour or so round-trip through undemanding woodlands. Among the most popular is the **Coastal Trail** ★, which runs between Newman Sound Campground and the information

center. You get great views of the sound (a noted bird sanctuary), and en route you pass the wonderfully named **Pissing Mare Falls.** The hike is between 8 and 10km (5–6 miles) in all, and takes perhaps 3 hours round-trip.

The most demanding hike, by far, is the **Outport Trail** ★★, a 48km (30-mile) walk that winds in and around the south shore of Newman Sound past several abandoned settlements, then doubles back upon itself. A nice side trail along the way leads up to the summit of a small mountain, with a great view of the sound and parklands. You can overnight at one of two backcountry sites along the way; or each direction can be completed in about 8 hours. With camping layovers the round-trip typically takes 2 to 3 days, the going sometimes slowed by bogs or wet sections. ***Remember:*** You must register with the park office before setting off on this trip.

To go **canoeing,** head for either Sandy Pond or Southwest Arm. Canoes are available for rent at Sandy Pond by the hour or day. You can cobble together a very attractive 10km (6-mile) one-way trip from Sandy Pond by paddling to Beachy Pond (however, this requires a 400m/¼-mile portage), then continuing onward to Dunphy's Pond.

The park also lends itself quite nicely to **sea kayaking.** If you've brought your own boat, ask for route suggestions at the information center. (Overnight trips to Minchin and South Broad coves are good options, as are day trips out to Swale Island.) If you haven't, outfitter **Ocean Quest** (✆ **866/623-2664** or 709/834-7234) in the St. John's area maintains a rental kiosk in Terra Nova's visitor center.

For a lower-calorie-burning view, consider a tour with **Coastal Connections** ★ (✆ **709/533-2196**), which sails in a converted fishing boat that looks more like a small yacht. It runs two or more times daily from the wharf at the visitor center. You're all but certain to spot bald eagles and, with some luck, whales and icebergs; the 2½-hour tours typically cost C$65 per adult and C$35 for children under 17. (Rates are discounted by about 25% if you bring a family of at least four.) Be sure to purchase and bring your park entry pass before boarding.

CAMPING

Terra Nova's main campground is at **Newman Sound.** It has more than 340 campsites (mostly of the gravel-pad variety, about a hundred with electrical hookups) in and around spruce forest and sheep-laurel clearings. Amenities include free showers, a grocery store and snack bar, evening programs, a children's activity center (Nature House), a Laundromat, and hiking trails. Be aware that the campground can get noisy and bustling in peak season. Fees are C$19 to C$29, depending on level of services and time of year. It's open from mid-May through mid-October.

At the park's northern border is the more rustic **Malady Head** ★ campground, open a shorter season (late June through early Sept). This is a better destination for those looking for quiet. It has about 100 campsites, hot showers, and access to a popular hiking trail, but no electrical or water hookups at the sites. If you want to build your own campfire, come here; at Newman Sound, fires are restricted to communal fire pits. The camping fee is C$17 to C$22 per night.

Terra Nova also maintains a handful of primitive but scenic **backcountry campsites** ★ at a half-dozen other areas. Between four and eight parties can camp at each site, and all but **Beachy Pond** allow open fires. **Dunphy's Island** is accessible by canoe only and involves a 400m (¼-mile) portage; on the shore across from the island site is another site, which is also accessible via a 5km (3-mile) footpath. These all cost C$16 per night.

For a more coastal backcountry experience, head for either **Minchin's Cove** or **South Broad Cove.** Both can be reached after demanding hikes (of 11km/7 miles and 16km/10

 miles, respectively) on the **Outport Trail** ★, which departs from Newman Sound Campground (see "Hiking & Boating," above). You can also arrange to be dropped off by boat, then picked up later; ask at the visitor center for details. As I've mentioned previously, backcountry campers must register in advance at the park's visitor center and pay an access fee for the privilege.

WHERE TO STAY & DINE

Campgrounds are your only option within the park itself. At the northern end of the park, the town of **Eastport** (see "Nearby Excursions," below) is 16km (10 miles) from the Trans-Canada Highway on Route 310 and offers several places to stay overnight.

One good place is the handsome white **Doctor's Inn Bed & Breakfast** ★, 5 Burden's Rd. (✆ **877/677-3539** or 709/677-3539), with six rooms priced at C$70 to C$95 per night; there are a large patio and gazebo here, full breakfast is included with your rate, and you can purchase lobster dinners in the dining room during the summer. It's normally open from May through the end of October. There's also the seasonal **Inn by the Sea** (✆ **866/677-3002** or 709/651-2842) on a hill overlooking the beach at 82 Beach Rd. This Cape Cod style home close to the beach features five simple, old-fashioned rooms costing C$75 to C$95 per night. One unit has a Jacuzzi, and all of them have phones and Internet access. The hosts serve you snacks on arrival.

Finally, right on the beach are the **Seaview Cottages** (✆ **709/677-2271**) at 325 Beach Rd., open May through September. There are 23 basic one- and two-bedroom cottages with televisions and kitchenettes lined up side-by-side here, and the property includes a small indoor heated swimming pool, miniature golf course, barbecue area, and other family-friendly amenities. Rates are about C$60 to C$75 per night, making them a good-value choice.

Terra Nova Golf Resort ★ (Kids) This modern three-story resort on more than 80 hectares (200 acres) of oceanfront property is a short drive off Route 1, about 2km (a mile) south of Terra Nova's southern entrance. Even better, it's adjacent to the **Twin River Golf Course** ★★—one of Atlantic Canada's most scenic and best-regarded courses—and a smaller 9-hole course. The hotel isn't lavish, though; it just offers regular, cookie-cutter rooms that are well situated for a golfing holiday or visiting the park. (The two- and three-bedroom chalets, fully furnished, are a luxe exception and priced to match.) Ask for an ocean view if that's important to you. This is a popular place with families, since kids can roam the grounds, splash around in the pool, and play video games. Note that about two-thirds of the rooms here are furnished with double beds; the rest are king- or queen-bedded, with pullout sofas. There are also a handful of suites with full kitchens. A dining room serving standard fare opens daily for breakfast and dinner; there's also a pub downstairs.

Rte. 1, P ort Blandford, NL A0C 2G0. ✆ **709/543-2525.** Fax 709/543-2201. w ww.terranovagolf.com. 94 units. C$100– C$200 double and suit e, C$325- C$350 chalet. P ackages a vailable. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. **Amenities:** 2 r estaurants; pub; driving range; 2 golf c ourses Jacuzzi; heat ed out door pool; sauna; 2 tennis courts. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units); k itchenette (some units).

NEARBY EXCURSIONS

Route 310 runs along the northern edge of Terra Nova National Park and winds along inlets and hillsides to the **Eastport Peninsula** ★. In and around the town of **Eastport** are a number of fine sandy beaches, hidden in coves and laid out in long strands edging the road. Some of the best are located along the road from Eastport to Salvage; this route

also passes through the wonderfully named village of **Happy Adventure,** as well as the aptly named village of **Sandy Cove.** Follow signs and bear right as you enter Eastport.

Across from the Sandy Cove beach is the start of the so-called **Old Trails,** a local system of walking tracks that have been joined into a corridor that winds along a wooded ridge and past remote ponds about 8km (5 miles) one-way to the lovely little village of Salvage. If you're an experienced hiker, pack a lunch, sturdy boots, and a compass, and make an adventure of it. Brochures with general descriptions of the trails are sometimes available in the local villages. They're also described online in a well-made local tourism website, **www.roadtothebeaches.ca/oldtrails.htm**.

If you don't have time to walk, drive onward to the picturesque fishing village of **Salvage** ★★, 10km (6 miles) from Sandy Cove by road. The road mostly runs alongside the water, except for periodic detours up into the hills. The village itself is tucked into and around several coves, and everywhere great slabs of rock protrude from the earth, lending a cinematic drama to the landscape. More about the region's history can be found at the **Salvage Fisherman's Museum** ★ (✆ **709/677-2414**), set on a low hill overlooking the harbor. It's housed in the oldest building in the area, an 1860 home now filled with displays on local fishing heritage. It's open daily from mid-June to mid-September, usually from 10am to 6pm (but sometimes shorter hours); there's a small admission charge.

A longer excursion is the **ferry trip** ★ that winds through a beautiful archipelago to remote **St. Brendan's Island** ★. From **Burnside,** just north of Eastport, provincial ferries (✆ **709/466-4121** or 709/677-2204) run three to five times daily year-round, with one-way fares of C$8.25 for a car and driver, C$2.75 for additional passengers, C$2 for senior citizens and children age 5 to 12. (You pay the fare when leaving the island only.) The crossing takes 1 hour. The island itself is home to several small communities strung out along 10km (6 miles) of unpaved road, although there are few services for travelers—just a couple general stores. (The island does make a good destination for mountain bikers, though.) Otherwise, just take the ferry out and back as a low-budget, scenic boat tour: The islands between Burnside and St. Brendan's are uninhabited, wild, and beautiful. You might even spot **bald eagles** perched along the shore during the crossing.

Also in Burnside, check out the **Burnside Archaeology Centre museum** ★★ (✆ **709/677-2474**) on Main Street, easily recognizable by the replica *mamateek* (aboriginal Canadian birch-bark house) standing outside. The museum displays artifacts from local archaeological digs that have been going on here for about 20 years; some items are as old as 5,000 years. This is a fascinating record of the Beothuk people who inhabited Newfoundland at the time of the first Viking and European contact. You can also watch staff sifting, cleaning, and cataloguing some of the finds. It's usually open daily, mid-June through October (but call ahead before coming). This is also a good place to park and stretch your legs for a scenic walk around the little village.

8 THE BONAVISTA PENINSULA ★★

The **Bonavista Peninsula** juts northeast into the sea just south of Terra Nova National Park. It's a worthy side trip for travelers fascinated by the island's past. You'll find a historic village, a wonderfully curated historic site, and one of the province's most intriguing lighthouses. It's also a good spot to see whales, puffins, and icebergs.

Along the south shore of the peninsula is **Trinity** ★★★, an impeccably maintained and scenic old village. (The local historic society has final say over what can and can't be built or changed there.) Some longtime visitors grouse it's becoming overly popular and dandified with B&Bs, but there's still a palpable sense of tradition in this profoundly historic spot. It's also the only place for miles to find good shelter and a decent meal.

From Trinity, it's about 40km (25 miles) out Route 230 to the tip of the peninsula (which could take an hour or more to drive). Somewhere along this route, which isn't particularly scenic, you may wonder whether it's worth it; it is. Plan to spend at few hours exploring the dramatic, ocean-carved point and its fine fishing village of **Bonavista** ★★, with three more historic properties to walk through. It costs C$3 per person to visit the red-and-white **Cape Bonavista Lighthouse,** open mid-May through early October. The one historical sight possibly worth seeing is the **Bonavista North Regional Museum** (✆ **709/536-2110**), open daily from 10am to 6pm July through September. It features displays on fishermen and the local fishing industry, as well as some items depicting community life here during the early 20th century. There's an art gallery at the site, as well.

As there are very few interesting accommodations or intriguing restaurants this far out on the peninsula, it's probably better to plan this as a day trip than as an overnight. Base yourself either in Trinity or in Terra Nova National Park (see previous section).

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE Depending on the direction you're coming from, the Bonavista Peninsula can be reached from the Trans-Canada Highway via Route 233, Route 230, or Route 230A. Route 230 runs all the way to the tip of the cape; Route 235 forms a partial loop back and offers some splendid water views along the way. The round-trip from the Trans-Canada at **Clarenville** to Bonavista is about 217km (135 miles or 5 hours).

VISITOR INFORMATION For information on this region, consult the **Discovery Trail Tourism Association** (✆ **866/420-3255** or 709/466-3845; www.thediscoverytrail.org) in downtown Clarenville with your questions; they have the best information about this stunningly lovely and historically fascinating region. Get there by taking the Clarenville/Route 230 exit off the Trans-Canada Highway; the association's office is on Clarenville's main street, almost 2km (about a mile) off the Trans-Canada. It's about 40km (25 miles) south of Terra Nova National Park to here, and about 72km (45 miles) farther along Route 430 to Trinity. The tourism association also maintains a very informative website at **www.thediscoverytrail.org**.

There's also a **provincial visitor information center** (✆ **709/466-3100**) on the Trans-Canada Highway in Clarenville, open daily mid-May through September.

TRINITY ★★

It's hard to believe, but the tiny coastal hamlet of **Trinity** (now with a year-round population of less than 200) once had more residents than St. John's. For more than 3 centuries, from the time of its first visit by Portuguese fishermen in the 1500s until well into the 19th century, the village did steady business as a hub for traders (mostly from England) who supplied the booming fishing economy of Trinity Bay and eastern Newfoundland.

Technological advances, including the railroad and car, eventually doomed Trinity's prosperity and the town lapsed into an extended economic slumber. But you can still see lingering traces of the town's former affluence, from the attractive flourishes in the architecture to the rows of white picket fences all around the village.

In recent years, the provincial government and concerned locals have each taken a keen interest in preserving the place, and it's clearly benefiting from a revival; the shooting of the Hollywood film *The Shipping News* (based on a novel about Newfoundland) in a nearby village in 2000 greatly helped raise the area's profile, too. Many local homes have recently been preserved, and a good number have also been made over as bed-and-breakfasts.

Several buildings (see below) are open to the public as provincial historic sites, two others as local historical museums. Most are open from mid-June to early October, then shuttered the remainder of the year. Allow about 3 hours to wander about and explore. Remember that, on days when the popular local historic pageant is held (see "Tours & Shows," below), a flood tide of visitors overwhelm the little town, making parking and rooms scarce and meals difficult to obtain. Come when it's quiet.

Start your voyage into the past at the **Trinity Interpretation Centre** (✆ **709/464-2042**) on West Street, open 10am to 5:30pm daily from mid-May through very early October. Here you can purchase tickets, pick up a walking-tour map, and get oriented with a handful of history exhibits. Entry costs C$3 per adult and child age 13 or older. This ticket also admits you to the Lester-Garland property and the Hiscock House (see below), which keep the same seasons and hours as the interpretation center.

A minute's walk away is the brick **Lester-Garland Premises** (✆ **709/464-2042**), often the first stop on Trinity travelers' itineraries. Here you can learn about the traders and their times. This handsome Georgian-style building is a convincing replica (but it was only built in 1997) of one of the earlier structures. The original was occupied until 1847, when it was abandoned; it was eventually torn down (to the horror of preservationists) in the 1960s, but some of the building's hardware, including some doors and windows, were salvaged and warehoused until the rebuilding.

Next door is the **Ryan Building,** where a succession of the town's most prominent merchants kept shops. The grassy lots between these buildings and the water were once filled with warehouses, none of which survived. The **Rising Tide Theatre** (✆ **888/464-3377** or 709/464-3232) is architecturally styled after one of the warehouses (an imagination is helpful in envisioning the others). The 255-seat theater is a good stop if you enjoy the arts, and offers a surprisingly full card of dramatic productions from mid-June through the fall. Performances here are top-rate, and well worth the admission cost; that's remarkable in such a remote outpost.

A short walk away, just past the parish house, is the **Hiscock House** (✆ **709/464-2042**), a handsome home where Emma Hiscock raised her children and ran a shop after the untimely death of her husband in a boating accident at age 39. The home has been restored to appear as it might have in 1910, and helpful guides in costume fill in the details and demonstrate skills from the past. Again, the combination Trinity ticket gets you in here for C$3 per adult from mid-May through early October; children under 13 enter for free.

The **Trinity Museum** on Church Road (✆ **709/464-3599**), in a late-19th-century home, contains more than 2,000 everyday artifacts that one might have seen in Trinity a century or more ago; operated by the local historical society, it's open from mid-June through mid-October, 10am to 5:30pm daily. The fire pump housed in an adjacent shed dates from 1811 and is intriguing.

Also nearby is the **Green Family Forge Blacksmith Museum** ★ on Church Rd., just beyond handsome **St. Paul's Anglican Church** ★. Costumed museum staff teach you about an industry that was essential here during the early 18th century. The smith and museum here are open the same season and hours as the museum.

Tours & Shows

An entertaining way to learn about the village's history is from the unusual **Trinity Pageant,** which lasts throughout the months of July and August. Once a day, local actors lead a changing audience on a walk through the village's streets, acting out scenes from the past. For dates and tickets, contact the **Rising Tide Theatre** (see above).

Also recommended are the 2-hour historical walking tours of Trinity led six days a week (no tour Sunday) at 10am by **Kevin Toope** (✆ **709/464-3723**). Kevin, a local who was born nearby in the village of **Ireland's Eye** and grew up in Trinity, has put together an informed and entertaining walk through the village he knows so well. After his tutored loop around the winding streets, you'll come away with plenty of fascinating facts that bring the town to life. The tour costs C$8 per adult; it's free for kids.

Outdoor Pursuits

A trail system on the Bonavista Peninsula is being created through woodlands and over headlands. The **Discovery Trail Tourism Association** (✆ **866/420-3255** or 709/466-3845; see above) works to develop and promote hiking trails on the peninsula, and a trail guide is also available.

There's a superb little walk about a 30-minute drive south of Trinity, outside the scenic fishing village of **New Bonaventure** ★. (Take Route 230 a few miles west to **Lockston,** then turn south on Route 233, to get there.) The **Kerley's Harbour Trail** ★★ begins from the end of the parking lot beside St. John's Anglican Church; bear right as you enter New Bonaventure, then drive uphill to the end of the road. This short, 2km (mile-long-plus) trail—a grassy lane that winds over rolling hills and past a pristine pond—requires about 35 minutes of walking and ends at the ghost town of **Kerley's Harbour,** a well-protected cove flanked by rocky hills and open meadows dotted with falling-down (and fallen-down) homes.

Where to Stay

Both inns described below are in the heart of Trinity's historic area. Reservations are essential during the peak summer season, especially when the pageant is scheduled. If you come without one, you may be risking a nighttime drive all the way back to the Trans-Canada Highway and **Clarenville** (about 72km, or 45 very slow miles, away) to find a room.

Lockston Path Provincial Park (✆ **709/464-3553**) is a short drive from Trinity in **Port Rexton,** and it's one of the better-outfitted of the province's parks for camping. From mid-May to mid-September, there are 56 campsites (about half have full water and electrical hookups), and the park has a modern comfort station with free hot showers, too. You can also swim at a big sandy beach (though there's no lifeguard). The campsites cost C$15 to C$23 each.

Finally, if you're still stuck for a room, **Eriksen Premises** (a restaurant on West Street; see "Where to Dine," below) also operates a bed-and-breakfast, renting out seven well-appointed suites in an 18th-century home from May through October for around C$100 per night. Most are simple and sturdy, though one has a Jacuzzi. Call ✆ **877/464-3698** or 709/464-3698 for details.

Bishop White Manor Bed & Breakfast This 19th-century house with early woodwork and tin ceilings was home to Newfoundland's first native-born bishop, and is convenient to just about everything in Trinity. It's solid-looking and serviceable, though the rooms are small and lack televisions or phones. (The small extra cost for one of the larger rooms is worth spending, especially if it's bad weather and you'll need to stay put

all day.) There's limited common space on the first floor, although the rear deck is a nice spot to unwind if the weather's sunny. One wonderful bonus: a full breakfast at **Eriksen Premises** (see "Where to Dine," below) is included with your rate.

Gallavan's Lane (P.O. Box 58), Trinity, NL A0C 2S0. ✆ **877/464-3698** or 709/464-3299. Fax 709/464-2104. www.trinityexperience.com. 9 units. C$80–C$95 double. Rates include full breakfast at Eriksen Premises. AE, MC, V. Closed Nov–Apr. *In room:* No phone.

Campbell House B ed & Breakfast Inn ★ Finds This handsome 1840 home and two nearby cottages are set amid lovely gardens on a twisting lane overlooking Fisher Cove. Two rooms are on the second floor of the main house, and these have a nice historic flair, even to the point that they require some stooping beneath beams if you're tall. Two more rooms are located in a lovely and simple pine-paneled house just beyond the gardens, and they feature an adjacent waterfront deck and a full kitchen on the first floor. The **Twine Loft** (home to a restaurant serving good meals, and occasional performances) also overlooks the water, while the lone, pine-paneled suite features two bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a fireplace with a stone chimney; it costs about twice as much as the inn rooms. Some rooms have delightful views of the little harbor. An affiliated property, the **Artisan Inn,** offers two simple rooms for about the same price as a room at Campbell House, plus a studio suite with full kitchen, a television, VCR, library, deck, and grill. Innkeeper Tineke Gow and her family are great sources of local information and maintain a wine cellar on premises.

High St., Trinity, Trinity Bay, NL A0C 2S0. ✆ **877/464-7700** or 709/464-3377. F ax: 709/464-3377. w ww. trinityvacations.com. 3 units plus 3 units in Ar tisan Inn. C$119 double; C$155-C$250 suite. Rates include full br eakfast. P ackages a vailable. AE, DC, MC, V. Closed No v–May. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, kitchenette, no phone.

Where to Dine

Eriksen Premises ★ TRADITIONAL This former tea room, converted into a B&B (see "Where to Stay," above) is Trinity's best restaurant. The restaurant shares the first floor with a gift shop, yet has a homey feel thanks to its oak floors, beadboard ceiling, and Victorian accents. (There's also an outside deck, which is especially nice at lunchtime.) Meals here are mostly traditional fare: the ubiquitous Newfoundland cod tongue, broiled halibut, scallops, liver and onions, chicken, and the like. The service and food are a notch above the expected, though. Desserts, like the cheesecake topped with local bakeapples or berries, are especially good. There's also a cafe section (**Polly's Pantry**) serving coffee, tea, sandwiches, pastries, and ice cream.

West St. ✆ **877/464-3698** or 709/464-3698. Reser vations r ecommended during peak season. M ain courses C$10–C$19 at dinner. MC, V. Daily 8am–9:30pm. Closed Nov–May.

Village Inn ★ Finds TRADITIONAL The old-fashioned dining room at the Village Inn isn't vegetarian, but it does serve good vegetarian meals—an extremely rare sight in Newfoundland. The day's veggie options might include anything from a shepherd's pie made with lentils instead of beef to a rice-nut casserole. They also serve meat and fish, of course, and lots of other local diner-style fare: chowder, meatloaf, fried cod, liver and onions, a ham plate, and seafood platters. This is country cooking, everything made from scratch, soup to nuts (and on to dessert).

Taverner's Path. ✆ **709/464-3269.** Dinner entrees C$8–C$20. MC, V. Daily 8am–9pm.

BONAVISTA ★★

Bonavista is 45 minutes to an hour's drive north on Route 230 from Trinity, at the very end of the peninsula, and is strongly recommended as a day trip if you're spending a

Tips Begin at Paradise: The High Road to Bonavista

If you're going all the way north to land's end and **Bonavista,** I suggest a quick detour down **Route 238** first; the turnoff is in the village of **Paradise,** a pinprick of a junction about 8km (5 miles) shy of Bonavista. After about 5km (3 miles), you'll arrive in **Elliston,** a pretty enough coastal village; more to the point, this route takes you into Bonavista via a scenic road that crosses through high upland barrens. The road has excellent **views** ★ of the whitewashed town and its expansive bay, and you might even see an iceberg or two; this is a great vantage point to scan for them before heading back down to sea level.

night or two in the area. The section of **Bonavista Bay** here is noted for its icebergs, which can linger into middle or late summer, so watch for them closely by scanning the horizon for smaller "bergy bits."

The town's importance as a trade and fishing center has decreased somewhat (only because the cod have been seriously fished out), but a couple of surprisingly good cultural sites make this harbor well worth a visit, and Bonavista's present-day population of 3,800 is not too shabby considering where it's located. This place is somehow holding its own. Of course, it's also wonderfully photogenic any time of year—even in deep winter, when the brittle snows contrast with the pearly water of the bay, thin blues of the sky, and hulking, whitewashed frames of former warehouses lining the waterfront.

Exploring the Town

The **Ryan Premises National Historic Site** ★★ (✆ **709/468-1600**) opened in 1997, with Queen Elizabeth herself presiding over the ceremonies. Located in downtown Bonavista, the site is actually a photogenic grouping of several big white clapboard buildings at the harbor's edge. For more than a century, this had been the town's preeminent fish-salting complex, where fishermen sold their catches and bought the sundry goods needed to keep their boats and lives functioning. Michael Ryan opened for business here in 1857, and his heirs kept the business going all the way until 1978.

The spiffy restored complex no longer houses fish nor commerce, but instead an art gallery, museum, gift shop, furniture exhibit, an exhibit on the importance of cod and seals in Newfoundland's history—even a little theater space hosting musical performances, talks, and other events. It's a pretty remarkable little concentration of culture for a place so far from population centers. An hour or two here goes a long way toward helping you make sense of the rest of your visit to this singular island.

The site is open daily from mid-May through mid-October, 10am to 6pm. (They'll often open it up during the off season for a long-distance traveler, too, so call if you're coming.) Admission is C$3.90 adults, C$3.40 seniors, C$1.90 children, and C$9.80 families.

On the far side of the harbor is the beautiful **Mockbeggar Plantation** (✆ **709/468-7300**). Named for an English seaport that shared characteristics with Bonavista, this white home was once occupied by prominent Newfoundland politician F. Gordon Bradley. It's been restored to the way it looked when Bradley first moved here in 1940, and features much of the original furniture. With a few telltale exceptions (such as the carpets in the formal dining room), it shows a strong Victorian influence. There are also a restored cod-liver oil factory and carpentry shop to hold your interest; tours are available

if you want one. The house is managed as a provincial historic site, with an admission charge of C$3 for adults and children 13 and older; that ticket also gets you admission to the Cape Bonavista Lighthouse (see below). The home is open to the public daily from mid-May through early October, 10am to 5:30pm.

A replica of **the *Matthew*** ★ (✆ **877/468-1497** or 709/468-1493)—the ship John Cabot sailed from England to Newfoundland in 1497—floats in Bonavista's harbor all summer. This compact ship is an exacting copy, based on plans of the original ship, and it was built here by local craftspeople. (Don't confuse this with another *Matthew* replica, which crossed the Atlantic and sailed around Newfoundland in 1997.) That big white shed on the waterfront is a striking boathouse, where the ship is protected through the long winters; an interpretive center is also housed within. Occasional performances on the wharf or at the center provide a context for your tour of the ship, which is a sort of floating museum. (Because it's an exact copy, this craft doesn't have an engine or any modern safety devices; it can't leave the dock.)

The ship is open from mid-May through September, daily from 10am to 6pm (to 9pm on Fridays). Admission is C$7.50 adults, C$6.75 seniors, C$3 children ages 6 to 16, and C$17 per family. There's also a coffee shop inside the boathouse.

Just North of Town

The attractive **Cape Bonavista Lighthouse** ★ (✆ **709/468-7444**) is located about 6km (4 miles) north of town on the rugged point that marks land's end. Built in 1843, the lighthouse is essentially a stone tower around which a red-and-white wood-frame house has been constructed. The keepers' quarters (the lightkeeper and his assistant both lived here) have been restored to their look in the year 1870; you can clamber up narrow stairs to the light and inspect the ingenious clockwork mechanism that kept six lanterns revolving all night, every night, between 1895 and 1962. (With the help of the keepers, that is: It took 15 minutes to rewind the counterweight by hand, a job that needed to be repeated every 2 hours all night long. Talk about tedious.) The light served mariners for more than a century until its role was eventually usurped by an inelegant steel tower and beacon.

The lighthouse is open daily from mid-May through early October from 10:30am to 5:30pm; admission is C$3 per adult, free for children 12 and under. (This ticket also gains you admission to the Mockbeggar Plantation historic home; see above.)

Below the lighthouse on a rocky promontory cleft from the mainland is a lively **puffin colony** ★★. These stumpy and colorful (and endangered) birds hop around the grassy knob, taking flight into the rough sea winds. They're easily seen from just below the lighthouse; bring binoculars for a clearer view, but don't disturb them. Red-footed common murres dive for fish, too, and whales are often sighted just offshore. You might even catch sight of whales and puffins through your binoculars at the same moment—with beautiful icebergs just out of frame.

Nearby is a **statue of John Cabot.** Although no one can prove it, long-standing tradition holds that Cape Bonavista was the first land spotted by the Italian explorer (who was working for the English) in 1497. The statue is located in **Landfall Municipal Park,** right next to the lighthouse, where you'll also find picnic tables and a **quiggly fence,** a traditional Newfoundland windbreak made of vertically woven whips or saplings.

En route to the lighthouse you'll also pass a turnoff to **Dungeon Provincial Park.** The park is almost 2km (about a mile) down a gravel road (through cow, goat, and sheep pastures); at the end of the gravel, park your car and then follow a short trail to a punchbowl-like cavity perhaps 45m (50 yards) across. Thousands of years' worth of

 pounding waves carved two tunnels beneath the pasture here, until the grassy roof collapsed all at once (wouldn't you have loved to have seen that?), leaving a gaping hole. Admission is free; there are a few picnic tables and primitive (pit) toilets, but nothing more.

9 THE BACCALIEU TRAIL

The **Baccalieu Trail** forms a loop around the long, narrow, unnamed peninsula that separates **Conception Bay** from **Trinity Bay.** It doesn't have the historical pedigree of the neighboring **Bonavista Peninsula,** which was the region's mercantile center in the early days, but the history here is actually more intriguing (in a quirky way). Characters such as the mysterious Amelia Earhart, the cranky Rockwell Kent, and pioneers of Arctic exploration and transatlantic communication figure prominently in local stories.

Be aware that this drive isn't completely picturesque. In fact, it's notably bland for a long stretch south of **Carbonear** (on the Conception Bay side). But elsewhere you'll come upon vistas that will leave you absolutely speechless. Also note that accommodations and eats are few and far between. I've recommended a few potential overnight points below; you'll want to plan this section of your trip ahead carefully, as it's difficult to get a last-minute bed when you're somewhat in the middle of nowhere.

On a short itinerary of Newfoundland (a week), I'd skip this peninsula. But on longer ones you might be able to work it in. Just remember that it takes a half-day of driving simply to get all the way out to the point and then double back and complete the circuit—and that's without making any stops.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE The Baccalieu Trail is composed of routes 80, 70, and 60. The entire detour to **Bay de Verde** and back from the Trans-Canada Highway is about 225 to 240km (140 or 150 miles), or 5 hours driving.

VISITOR INFORMATION The provincial **Visitor Information Center** (✆ **709/759-2170**) is located on the Trans-Canada Highway just west of Route 80 in **Whitbourne,** near one of two turnoff points for the Trail. It's open daily from mid-May through September. The local tourism agency, the **Northern Avalon Tourism Association** (✆ **709/596-3474**), operates out of an office in **Carbonear** and maintains a useful local tourism website. Look for it on the web at **www.baccalieutourism.com**.

DILDO ★

The fishing town of **Dildo** is saddled with what must be history's most unfortunate name. Yet the village—located about 11 or 12km (7 or 8 miles) north of the Trans-Canada Highway, on Route 80—is actually somewhat attractive, consisting of homes clustered along a hilly harbor's edge and a forested prominence rising near the outer point. While fishing has ground to a near halt since cod-protection measures kicked in, cultural tourism has picked up some of the slack, as visitors trek here to view traces of a once-thriving Indian culture. The island in the mouth of this harbor was occupied at various times by Beothuk, Dorset Eskimo, and modern Indians, and you can visit it by boat.

A good place to start is at the **Dildo & Area Interpretation Centre** (✆ **709/582-3339**), on the harbor (Front Rd.) as you come into town. (Look for the giant squid made

of fiberglass in the parking lot, an actual-size model of one actually caught near here in 1933.) The center opened in 1997 and displays some of the thousands of Eskimo artifacts recovered by archaeologists on the island, including harpoon end blades, knives, soapstone bowls and lamps, and scrapers. The center also features a touch tank with crabs and starfish for kids, plus a set of exhibits on the local fishing industry including a landing wharf and fish-drying exhibits. The center is open daily, June through September, from 10am to 6pm; admission costs C$2 for adults, C$1 for children, and C$5 for families.

The town's name? The generally accepted theory around here is that it was named by early Spanish sailors for some person or place in Spain, and then the spelling was changed later. Other theories abound, too, though: The name may come from a local Indian word meaning "still waters," or (less historical provenance for this one) taken from the chorus of some old ballad or another. The truth is, nobody really knows. But one thing's for sure: It wasn't named for *those.*

Now let's move on.

HEART'S CONTENT ★

Now this is a town with a much better name. Heart's Content was named either after an early ship that docked here or because of its vaguely heart-shaped harbor. Take your pick. Either way, it's a pleasing coastal village that claims a prominent footnote in the annals of communications history.

In 1858, the **first trans-Atlantic telegraph cable** was brought ashore here, connecting England with Newfoundland (and the United States). Queen Victoria and U.S. president James Buchanan quickly exchanged text messages, 19th-century style (no, they didn't cable "THIS IS KEWL LOL"). After just 27 days and 700-odd messages, though, the cable mysteriously failed—could it have been another giant Dildo squid?—and a second cable to Heart's Content was installed in 1866.

The second time was the charm. This replacement cable was the one that would prove to be a vital link between the New and Old Worlds. It also provided employment for 300 people in this village, and brought a measure of prosperity and diversity the area had sorely lacked. During the late 1800s, as many as 1,200 people lived here, double the present-day population. You can still see rusted and frayed cables jutting from an embankment near the center of town.

The brick cable station, with its distinctive gingerbread trim, still stands just across the road at the **Heart's Content Cable Station Historic Site** ★ (✆ **709/583-2160**). Here you can view the bulky antique equipment that got the job done, and learn more about how involved this historic enterprise really was to put together. (You'll be surprised.) There's also a 20-minute film. It's open daily from mid-May through early October, 10am to 5:30pm; admission is C$3 adults, free for children 12 and under.

There's one more attraction at the rocky point on the north side of Heart's Content's harbor: A simple but cute **barber pole-striped lighthouse** stands amid impressive, rounded rocks that seem to heave up from inside the heart of the earth. Wonderful views of Trinity Bay can be had from here, and it's a good spot for a picnic or a "me and the lighthouse" shot to post to your Flickr account.

BACCALIEU ISLAND ★ & BAY DE VERDE ★

Cliff-encircled **Baccalieu Island,** about 3km (2 miles) off the peninsula's tip, is only 5km (3 miles) long, but it has a rich history as a fishing center and location of an important **lighthouse.** (It has also been the site of more than 20 shipwrecks.) Yet the island's best

known today for its vast colonies of **seabirds** ★★★, almost a dozen of which breed here: a huge colony of puffins, plus northern fulmar, common murre, black-legged kittiwake, northern gannets, thick-billed murre, and razorbills, as well as a truly staggering three-million-plus colony of Leach's storm petrels. This is said to be the single greatest place of seabird diversity on the continent, though practically nobody knows it. Today the island is an ecological reserve.

The village of **Bay de Verde** at the northern tip of the peninsula is worth an excursion even if you're going to visit the island. The name comes from the Portuguese who plied these waters long ago; native peoples once hunted caribou in the area. A road reaches this remote fishing village today, but for years it didn't, and this still mostly has the feel of a place untouched by time. The village is dominated by trim, old-fashioned homes on stark rocky terraces overlooking a scenic little harbor; from a certain angle, it first reminds me of one of the hill towns of the Luberon or Umbria. Except that the "hill," in this case, is a bluff right beside a raging sea.

HARBOUR GRACE ★★

The historic town of **Harbour Grace** (pop. 3,000) sprawls along a waterfront on **Conception Bay.** It's not a picture-perfect town—there's plenty of charmless modern architecture mixed in with the historic—but you get a good sense of the region's rich history here, and there are a number of quirky attractions that will surely have you snapping photos and writing postcards.

Heck, the octagonal, pine-paneled **Kearney Tourist Chalet** (✆ **709/596-3042**) at the south end of town by the harbor is an attraction all by itself. Built in 1995, it closely resembles a local lighthouse. It's open from June through September, and contains a special room with information about the *Kyle,* a steamer anchored just offshore (see below).

Right beside the visitor center (sorry, tourist chalet) is the ***Spirit of Harbour Grace*** ★, a 1943 cargo transport plane that did time as a mail plane and also flew in North Africa before being modified into a DC-3 commuter aircraft. A gift to the town, it's mounted in a graceful banked turn, like a trout rising to take a fly. Impressive, but it's just one of three sites in town that testify to the golden (pre-automobile) age of transportation.

There's another one just offshore in the bay: the **SS *Kyle,*** a handsome coastal steamer lying aground and listing to port. This was one of the last of the wood-and-coal-burning coastal steamers. Built in Newcastle, England and launched in 1913, she was the first regular ferry to Labrador and plied Newfoundland waters until 1967, when a Nor'easter blew her from her moorings and she came to rest on a mussel bed. It cost the province just C$4,000 (okay, in 1972 dollars) to buy the ship from its former owners. A paint job in 1997 restored her brightly to her original color scheme: black-and-white around the hill, canary yellow at the smokestack.

The village also occupies a prominent niche in the **history of aviation.** The earliest pilots used this town's airfield as a jumping-off point for crossings of the Atlantic. In 1932, when she became the first woman to cross the Atlantic solo, **Amelia Earhart** took off from Harbour Grace. (There's a fuller, if slightly overblown, description of many of the flying firsts here on the town website at www.hrgrace.ca/air.html.)

You can revisit this rich history at **Harbour Grace Airstrip** ★, built in 1927. It's a stunningly beautiful and pristine spot on a hillside overlooking the harbor and the town, and it appears not to have changed much since Earhart took off for Europe more than a half-century ago, though the strip is growing over and planes very rarely land here anymore. You

can scramble atop the monolith at the north end of the airfield to get a sweeping view out to Conception Bay, with the lush, grassy airstrip stretching out below.

Find the airfield by driving almost 2km (a mile) north of the tourist chalet on Route 70, then turning left. The paved road soon ends; keep at it along the dirt road, continuing another couple of kilometers (a mile) past Route 70, then turn right on still another dirt road. Continue a couple more kilometers (1 more mile), passing the end of the airstrip, then turn right and drive to the top of the low hill. There's a small plaque here commemorating the early fliers.

More local history is on view at the fire engine-red **Conception Bay Museum** ★ (✆ **709/596-5465**) at 1 Water St. Located on a low bluff overlooking the harbor and distant sea stacks, the museum occupies a three-story brick-and-granite building that was originally a customs station when it was built in the 1860s. Inside you'll find artifacts, including an exhibit about Earhart; mocked-up rooms (an aviation room with a model of the town's airstrip, a sewing room with period furniture) and a ship (of early local pirate Peter Easton); and costumed guides. Some of these guides offer walking tours of the town's **Heritage District** by appointment.

The museum is open daily from June through September (though sometimes closed at lunch), closed the rest of the year. Admission is about C$2 per adult, C$1 for seniors and children ages 10 to 18.

Where to Stay & Dine

In addition to the inns described below, there are some (but not a lot of) motels along the Baccalieu Trail, especially along the southern stretches of Route 70.

If you get stuck for a place to stay, try the family-owned **Carbonear Motel** (✆ **877/596-5662** or 709/596-5662) at 1 High Road South in downtown **Carbonear**—it's just a block off Route 70, where that route bears right and jogs into the downtown. There are 15 efficiency units in all here, in three configurations, all with full kitchens, phones, and televisions; they cost from C$65 to C$80 per night, a very good deal. The place has high-speed Internet access in some rooms, and the proprietors are helpful about local sights. Ask for an ocean view when you book.

NaGeira House Bed & Breakfast Inn ★ (Finds) NaGeira House is named for the Irish princess Sheila NaGeira, who was kidnapped in the 17th century by some scurvy knaves but then rescued. She ended up in Carbonear and lived out the rest of her life here. Yes, these kinds of things really happened back in those days. This B&B opened in 1999 in a wonderful red gabled home (registered as a historic property), and the innkeepers have a good eye for detail from the down duvets and quality linens down to the delicious included breakfasts. The rooms vary widely in size, from the small, least expensive room no. 4 to a luxurious, spacious master suite with an in-room Jacuzzi, fireplace, and bay window. But all are acceptable, with nice touches like robes, four-poster beds of mahogany or iron, and phones. Guests can use a cozy library and living room; there's also a pub serving wine and spirits.

7 Musgrave St., Carbonear, NL A1Y 1A4. ✆ **800/600-7757** or 709/596-1888. Fax 709/596-4622. www.nageirahouse.com. 4 units. C$99–C$149 double. Rates include full breakfast. Packages available. AE, MC, V. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* TV (3 units), Jacuzzi (1 unit).

Rothesay House Inn ★ (Value) Open year-round, the Queen Anne–style Rothesay House dates from 1855 (though it was later renovated in stages). It sits on a low rise across the street from a harbor view, well situated for exploring Harbour Grace and the Baccalieu Trail. Each of the four simple, comfortable guest rooms has a private bathroom,

and the Butler family (your hosts) get good reviews. Guests sometimes hang out in the parlor and sitting room, and the inn's popular **dining room** ★ is open daily; make a reservation if you really want to eat here in high summer season. The menu changes often, but tends toward Continental—a nice break in a province where seafood is king. Menu choices could include pork chops with apple-cream sauce; chateaubriand; strip steak; or orange-basil chicken. (Of course, mussels, salmon, and cod are on the menu, too.) Desserts are very good.

34 Water St. (P.O. Box 577), Harbour Grace, NL A0A 2M0. ✆ **709/596-2268.** Fax 709/596-0317. www.rothesay.com. 4 units. C$89–C$119 double. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. **Amenities:** Dining room. *In room:* No phone.

BRIGUS ★★

You don't usually hear a whole lot about the trim harborside village of **Brigus** (pop. 800), but this town dates to 1612: It's got both scenery and history to recommend it.

The downtown is clustered with wood-frame homes and narrow lanes that extend out from the harbor while studly, lichen-scraped hills ring the inlet. It looks like the setting for some sadly powerful novel, and it's also blessed with a surprising number of historic little goodies, mostly thanks to its most famous resident—you'll hear about him in a second. It even has a cool name: a corruption of Brickhouse, which may have been a village in England.

The place is well-known to art historians, however, who recall it as the town that gave the boot to American artist **Rockwell Kent,** who lived here briefly in 1914 and 1915 with his family—creating iconoclastic, important post–Armory Show images that mark the beginning of his signature style—until his expulsion. World War I was raging, and Kent was suspected of "pro-German activities." (The artist's crime? He sang songs in Pennsylvanian Dutch. Tough break.) Kent eventually got back to Newfoundland, more than a half-century later, as a guest of the premier and forgave the province and its people for the snub. Better late than never, I guess.

Near the harbor, look for the 24m (80-ft.-long) **Brigus Tunnel** ★, built in a single summer under the watch of Captain Robert Abram Bartlett, the famed mariner and Arctic explorer from Brigus. His deepwater dock sat on one side of a low, rocky ridge. . . while his warehouses languished on the other side. He fixed that problem by hiring a Cornish miner to blast a pathway right through the rock. Although Bartlett's dock and warehouses are long gone, and local teens have defaced the tunnel with graffiti, you can still stroll right through the tunnel; it's about 2.5m by 2.5m (8 feet wide and 8 feet high). You're rewarded with a fine view of the harbor when you exit. (For much more on Bartlett, visit Hawthorne Cottage, described below.)

More tunnel trivia: The town's **Ye Olde Stone Barn Museum** (see below) showcases two of the actual hollowed-out spikes used during the blasting of the tunnel. (They were filled with gunpowder, then lit.)

Also in the downtown, the whitewashed, Gothic Revival **St. George's Anglican Church** ★ hosts local musicians year-round; tickets are generally C$10 to C$15 per performance. There's an art gallery at the church, and local writers sometimes read from their work (small donations are requested).

The town also has a stylized steel **sculpture** of a ship (at Bishop's Beach), gardens, parks, and churches to hold your interest, and in mid-August there's the annual three-day **Brigus Blueberry Festival,** when concessions, crafts, fireworks, and blueberry-spiked foods come to town; count me in.

Hawthorne Cottage National Historic Site ★★ This elaborate, vaguely Tudor gingerbread cottage on a lovely landscaped yard in the center of Brigus was local captain Bob Bartlett's home. You can learn a lot about him here; his role in captaining Robert E. Peary's ship the *Roosevelt* toward the North Pole during the winter of 1908–1909, his heroic walk over 1,130km (700 miles) of Arctic sea ice to help save most of a stranded crew during a different expedition, and much more. (Bartlett has been justly called the "greatest ice navigator of the century.") His cottage was built in 1830, then moved here in 1833 from a few miles away; today, it's furnished much as it might have been at the turn of the 20th century—except for the gift shop in the cottage purveying Newfoundland crafts, that is. Non-history buffs might skip this stop in lieu of photographing more icebergs, but I happen to think it's a very cool museum highlighting an overlooked man of remarkable talents living during a heady moment in history. If you're like me, drop by and give it an hour.

Corner of South Street and Irishtown Road, Brigus. ✆ **709/528-4004.** Admission C$4 adults, C$3.50 seniors, C$3.20 children 6–16, C$10 families. July–Aug, daily 9am–7pm; May–June and Sept–Oct Wed–Sun 9am–5pm.

Ye Olde Stone Barn Museum ★★ Ignore the kitschy spelling; this might be one of the best small museums in the whole province, focusing on local history inside an 1820s stone structure built originally as a home for a Scottish doctor. Later, it was used as a customs house and then, yes, a barn. The museum is made completely of stone, but is largely a reconstruction now; some of the original stonework collapsed. Inside, there's a limited but well-chosen selection of artifacts, including a beautiful plate hand-painted by Rockwell Kent during his short, controversial residency here and those steel spikes used during the construction of the Brigus Tunnel (see above). It's open daily from mid-June through Labor Day, weekends only in September and October.

4 Magistrate's Hill. ✆ **709/528-4982.** Admission C$1 adults, C50¢ children. Mid-June to Labor Day daily 11am–6pm; Sept–Oct weekends only 11am–6pm. Closed Nov to mid-June.

10 ST. JOHN'S ★★

St. John's (always abbreviated and with an apostrophe), the oldest English-settled city in North America, is a world apart from the rest of Newfoundland. The island's small fishing villages and long empty roads through spruce and bog speak of loneliness, quietude, and wildness; St. John's, on the other hand, is a vibrant, cultured, and bustling place. Coming into this city (pop. 180,000, including suburbs) after traveling the hinterlands is like stepping from Kansas into Oz; the picture suddenly bursts into color. In a manner of speaking.

Like its sister cities in the Maritimes, Halifax and Saint John, St. John's also serves as a magnet for its province's youth culture, and clubs and restaurants here have a more cosmopolitan, edgier feel than anywhere else on this extremely rural and conservative island. Mix in the presence of **Memorial University**—the province's top institution of higher learning—less than 3km (2 miles) west of the harbor, and this city gets yet another shot in the cultural arm.

St. John's natural harbor is impressive, protected from the open seas by stony hills and accessible only through a narrow, pinched gap called (wait for it) **The Narrows,** a rocky defile of the sort you'd expect to see a guy like Atlas straddling. The Narrows sits at the north end of the harbor, hidden from much of the downtown, so first-time visitors may

think they've stumbled upon a small lake—albeit one with tankers and other oceangoing ships sitting on it. But this is no lake, just a very protected harbor.

If you can arrange your trip that way, come to St. John's after you've explored the remote parts of Newfoundland described earlier in this chapter. At that point—after a couple weeks eating fried seafood, staying in simple inns and motel rooms or camping beneath the stars—you'll more fully appreciate the city's urban attitude, its pizzazz, and its diversity of culture. Not to mention the wide choice of hotels and a truly varied cuisine that might make you wake up the next morning and momentarily wonder: Where am I today, anyway?

Yes, it's really that different from the rest of The Rock.

ESSENTIALS

GETTING THERE St. John's is located about 136km (85 miles, or an hour and a half's drive) from the seasonal car ferry at **Argentia** (see "Getting There," p. 266, for details on the ferry). If you're coming from the other end of the province, it's about 900km (560 miles)—perhaps 10 hours of driving, not including stops—from the year-round car ferry at **Port aux Basques.**

St. John's International Airport (✆ **866/758-8581** or 709/758-8500; www.stjohnsairport.com) receives flights from Halifax, Montréal, Ottawa, Toronto, and elsewhere in Canada, as well as internationally. See "Getting There" (p. 267) at the beginning of this chapter for more detailed information on airlines that fly into this airport. The airport is 4 miles from downtown; taxis from the airport to downtown hotels cost from C$23 to C$28

VISITOR INFORMATION The city's **tourist office** (✆ **709/576-8106**) is located at 348 Water St., and is open year-round (daily 9am–5pm in summer, weekdays only 9am–4:30pm the rest of the year). The city produces a free, informative, and comprehensive pocket-size brochure detailing walking and driving tours of the metro area; it's an outstanding resource for planning and executing your visit to the city. Ask for it at the tourist office. The city's tourism website is at **www.stjohns.ca**.

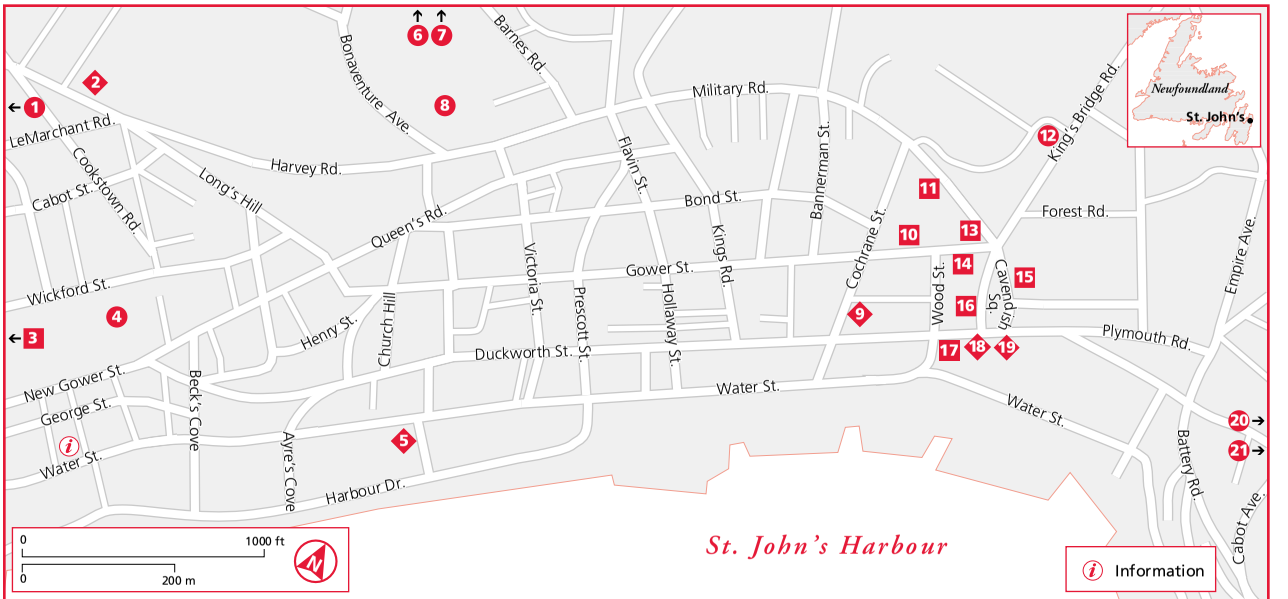
There's also a good **provincial visitor information desk** (✆ **709/758-8515** or 758-8757) at the city airport, which remains open year-round—one of only two such provincial VICs in the entire province that do so.

GETTING AROUND The **Metrobus** (www.metrobus.com) system serves much of the city. Fares are C$2.25 for a single trip (C$1.75 for children 3 and over). Route information is available at the visitor information center or by calling the system's "Ride Guide" at ✆ **709/722-9400.**

Taxis are plentiful around St. John's; they charge an initial fee of C$3.25, plus about C$2 per additional mile. You can usually tour the city by taxi for around C$30 per hour.

ORIENTATION St. John's is built on the side of a steep hill. The downtown is oriented along three relatively level streets—**Harbour, Water,** and **Duckworth**—that run parallel to water's edge, one above the other. Duckworth and Water streets contain the bulk of the shops and restaurants. Cross streets linking these main drags run the gamut from moderately challenging inclines to clutch-smoking vertical hills.

Outside its central downtown, St. John's is an amalgam of confusing roads that run at peculiar angles to one another and suddenly change names on a whim. You can try to navigate with a map, but it's just as easy to orient yourself by some landmark—such as Signal Hill—and then point your car in the general direction you want to go. The city's small enough that you shouldn't ever get too lost, and you'll eventually end up on the



ATTRACTIONS ●

Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist **8**
City Hall **4**
Commissariat House **12**
Pippy Park and Memorial University **1**
Quidi Vidi **20**
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At Wit's Inn **14**
Bonne Esperance House Heritage Inn B&B **10**
City Hostel **13**
Delta St. John's **3**
Elizabeth Manor B&B **11**
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DINING ◆

The Cellar **5**
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Classic Café East **19**
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 main ring road (which also goes by various names, including Columbus Drive, Confederation Parkway, and Prince Philip Drive).

SPECIAL EVENTS The great annual **Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Festival** ★★ began in 1976 and is well worth a visit. This 3-day shindig, usually held during the first full weekend in August, brings in performers from all over the province to play in Bannerman Park downtown. (Bring a lawn chair.) Even after all these years, tickets are still quite affordable: Figure about C$12 per adult (less for seniors and children) for an afternoon pass or evening pass allowing you access to the entire slate of performers, or around C$50 for an all-weekend pass. That's a bargain, folkies.

Contact the festival organizers at the **Newfoundland and Labrador Folk Arts Council** (✆ **866/576-8508** or 709/576-8508; www.nlfolk.com) for schedules and information about how to purchase tickets.

EXPLORING ST. JOHN'S

Parking is rarely a problem in downtown St. John's, so long as you remember to bring plenty of loonies and quarters to feed the parking meters. Once you park, you can continue easily by foot; the downtown area is quite compact. St. John's drivers seem to be especially respectful of pedestrians, too—a nice bonus. If you so much as take a step off the curb (or even wrinkle your brow to think about it), drivers might all come to a halt and wave you across.

My advice? Bring a good pair of walking shoes to St. John's, and plan to use them a lot.

DOWNTOWN ATTRACTIONS

Anglican Cathedral of St. John the Baptist This impressive hillside cathedral was constructed in stages from 1843 to 1885, with additional rebuilding following the great fire of 1892. Designed in high Gothic Revival style by the noted English architect Sir George Gilbert Scott, the cathedral features wonderful stained glass work, lavish oak carvings, and bluestone walls from nearby quarries. (The sandstone used in the arches and bays was shipped from Scotland, though.) After admiring the architecture and a small one-room museum, stop by the crypt, where sweets and tea are served weekdays. It's an hour peacefully spent. Tours of the interior are given in July and August most weekdays, and sometimes on Saturday and Sunday mornings year-round; contact the church office in advance to inquire about getting one.

16 Church Hill. ✆ **709/726-5677.** Free admission; free tours July–Aug Mon–Fri 10am–4pm, and some weekends year-round (but call ahead).

Commissariat House This stellar Georgian house, built in 1821, has served a number of purposes over the years. Originally constructed as offices and living quarters to serve Fort William and other military installations around the city, the building subsequently served as a rectory, nursing home, and children's hospital. The house has been restored to look as it might have in 1830, with the English china, fine paintings, and elaborate furnishings that an assistant commissary general would have enjoyed. Fans of historic architecture and 19th-century period furnishings could spend an hour.

King's Bridge Rd. ✆ **709/729-6730.** C$3 adults, free for children age 12 and under. Mid-May to early Oct daily 10am–5:30pm.

The Rooms Provincial Art Gallery ★ The province's official art gallery has now moved downtown into The Rooms, the multifunction cultural facility that makes a very appropriate home for it. Permanent and rotating exhibits mostly showcase Newfoundland

artists, but the occasional touring show highlights artists from other provinces, as well. Consult the website to see what's currently on display, and spend a couple of hours here if the exhibitions catch your eye.

9 Bonaventure Ave. ✆ **709/757-8040.** www.therooms.ca/artgallery. C$7.50 adults, C$5 seniors, C$4 children 6–16, C$20 families; free every Wed 6–9pm. Ticket also gains entry to museum (see below). Additional charge for certain special exhibits. June to mid-Oct Mon–Sat 10am–5pm (Wed to 9pm), Sun noon–5pm; mid-Oct to May same hours except closed Mon.

The Rooms Provincial Museum ★★ (Kids) This downtown museum found a new home in 2005, moving to the arts/culture complex known as The Rooms alongside the province's art gallery provincial archives. It offers a good introduction to the natural and cultural history of The Rock, using exhibits that both kids and adults can appreciate. The second level might feature a lesson on canoe-building from an Innu native, for instance, or a temporary exhibit on taxidermy; permanent exhibits on this floor focus on the province's Irish fishing heritage, and recreate the life of British soldiers at Fort Townsend (which stood on this very spot during the 18th century). The museum's third level focuses on the post-Ice Age period when glaciers retreated and native peoples slowly filtered in and resettled the province, hunting and fishing for subsistence. You'll learn about flora and fauna, too: Did you know moose aren't native to Newfoundland? (I didn't.) Highlights of the vast collections here include delicate native carvings of bear heads and displays on the awesome power of the polar bear, while special exhibitions might include a quilt project; a show about heroic Brigus navigator Bob Bartlett; or a section on Arctic expeditions. Budget an hour or two if you're a history or natural buff, or are bringing kids.

9 Bonaventure Ave. ✆ **709/757-8020.** www.therooms.ca/museum. C$7.50 adults, C$5 seniors, C$4 children 6–16, C$20 families; free every Wed 6–9pm. Ticket also gains entry to art gallery (see above). Additional charge for certain special exhibits. June to mid-Oct Mon–Sat 10am–5pm (Wed to 9pm), Sun noon–5pm; mid-Oct to May same hours except closed Mon.

Signal Hill ★★ (Value) Come for the history, stay for the views. Signal Hill National Historic Site is St. John's most visible and visit-worthy attraction. The rugged, barren hill is the city's preeminent landmark, rising above the entrance to the harbor and topped with a craggy "castle" complete with a flag fluttering overhead—the "signal" referred to in the name. Over the centuries a succession of forts have occupied this hill (as did three different hospitals). The current, castlelike structure, officially called Cabot Tower, dates from 1897. But the hill really secured its spot in history in 1901, when the Italian inventor Guglielmo Marconi received the first transatlantic wireless telegraph broadcast—three dots, the letter *S* in Morse code, sent from England—on an antenna raised 121m (400 ft.) on a kite in powerful winds. Start in the interpretive center, where you get a briefing about the hill's history. (Military drills and cannon firings still sometimes take place in the field next to the center; ask here if you're interested.) From the center, follow serpentine trails uphill to the tower, where you're rewarded with breathtaking **views** ★ of The Narrows and the open ocean beyond it. You'll even sometimes spy icebergs floating by in early summer, and you can see whales most anytime of year—talk about getting your money's worth from one stop! Interpretive placards, scattered about the summit, feature photographs from various periods in the city's history. Bring the kids; this is almost a must-do.

Entrance to St. John's harbor. ✆ **709/772-5367.** Free admission to grounds; admission to interpretive center C$3.90 adults, C$3.40 seniors, C$1.90 children 6–16, C$10 families. Grounds open year-round; Interpretation Centre Apr to mid-Oct daily 10am–6pm, rest of the year Mon–Fri 8:30am–4:30pm; Cabot Tower Apr to mid-Jan daily 9am–5pm (Jun–Aug to 9pm). Closed mid-Jan to March.

The Fluvarium ★ Finds Kids What's a fluvarium? Well, in the case of St. John's, it's sort of like an upside-down aquarium. This low, octagonal structure at the edge of Long Pond—near Memorial University, a few miles west of the downtown—opened in 1990 to explain local freshwater ecology to kids (and tourists). The facility actually flows three stories down into the earth, just like water. The second level features exhibits on river ecology, including the fascinating marine life in stream riffles (where trout spawn) and shallow pools (which are rich with nutrients). On the lowest level, you look back up into the deep pool standing alongside the building; watch for big brown trout swimming by. These trout swam here naturally, of their own volition: a fish ladder leads to and from the museum to a local river, pond, and eventually the ocean. Pretty cool. Plan to spend an hour with the kids if you're in this neighborhood.

Pippy Park, off Allandale Rd. ✆ **709/754-3474.** www.fluvarium.ca. Admission C$5.50 adults, C$4.50 seniors and students, C$3.50 children under 14, family C$18. Hours variable; usually daily 9am–5pm in summer, Mon–Fri 9am–5pm, weekend noon–5pm in off season. Guided tours on the half-hour in summer; feeding time 4pm.

Charging Up to the Battery

When in St. John's, the one must-do hike for serious hikers (but only if you're not afraid of heights) is the **North Head Trail ★★**, which runs from **Signal Hill** to an improbable cluster of small buildings between the rocky face and the water called **The Battery.** Don't tackle this walk unless you are reasonably fit, though; while short (a little more than a mile), it's steep throughout, and *very* steep in places.

Here's how to get there. On foot, follow **Duckworth Street** between the Hotel Newfoundland and Devon House, then bear right onto **Battery Road.** Stay on the main branch (a few smaller branches may confuse you) as the pathway narrows, rises, and falls while skirting a rock face. First you reach the so-called **Outer Battery.** The former fishermen's homes here are literally inches from the road—and not much farther from the water—and most have drop-dead views of The Narrows and the city skyline. There's a whimsical, storybook character to this section.

At the end of the Battery, you'll cross someone's front porch (it's okay), and from here the trail gets serious. It runs along **The Narrows,** past old gun emplacements, up and down hundreds of heroic sets of steps, then along narrow cliffs that drop away clear to the ocean. (Chains are bolted to the rocks as handrails in one place to keep you out of the ocean; use them.) Still sure you want to do this hike?

Now the trail ascends an open headland before looping back and starting a final climb up **Signal Hill.** After some time exploring and soaking up the view, you can save time on your return by walking a paved road back downhill to Duckworth Street where you began.

Allow about 2 hours total, assuming you began in the vicinity of the Hotel Newfoundland.

Memorial University Botanical Garden ★ An abundant selection of northern plants makes this garden well worth seeking out; it's tucked past a wooded ridge on the city's western fringe, at the back of lush Pippy Park (see "Outdoor Pursuits," below). The plots are arranged in gracious themes: There's a cottage garden, a rock garden, and a peat garden, for instance. Among the most interesting is the Newfoundland Heritage Garden, with specimens of 70 types of perennials traditionally found in the province's many gardens. These floral displays aren't as ostentatious or exuberant as you'll find in other public gardens in Atlantic Canada (the gardens of Halifax and Annapolis Royal are showier), but they're possibly of greater interest to amateur naturalists and horticulturists curious about boreal plant life. Behind the gardens, five hiking trails wind through a reserve and down to marshy Oxen Pond. Allow an hour for your visit.

306 Mt. Scio Rd. (take Thorburn Rd. past Avalon Mall; turn right on Mt. Scio Rd.). ✆ **709/737-8590.** www.mun.ca/botgarden. June–Sept admission C$6 adults, C$4 seniors, C$2.50 children 6–18, C$12 families; May, Oct, and Nov C$4 adults, C$3 seniors, C$2 children 6–18, C$10 families. Gardens and field center open May–Sept daily 10am–5pm and Oct–Nov daily 10am–4pm; gardens closed but field center open Dec–Apr Mon–Fri 8:30am–4pm.

OUTDOOR PURSUITS

There's plenty to do outside here, and a trip to **Quidi Vidi ★★** should be high on your list. Pronounced "kitty vitty" but known locally as "the Guy," it's a tiny fishing village outside the city center that sets new standards for the word quaint. Tucked into a rocky defile behind Signal Hill (see "Downtown Attractions," above) and built around a narrow inlet of sea, the place is extremely photogenic—a great stop on foot or by bicycle, but rather difficult to reach by car. The village consists mostly of compact old homes (including the oldest home in St. John's, but there's now also a microbrewery (see "Where to Dine," later).

To get there, follow **Signal Hill Road** to Quidi Vidi Road, then turn right onto Forest Road. From here you can easily connect to Quidi Vidi Lake, where St. John's Regatta is held the first Wednesday in August, as it has been since 1826. Look for the trail leading to the lake from near the entrance to Quidi Vidi, or ask locally.

Huge **Pippy Park ★★** (✆ **709/737-3655**) is on the city's hilly western side, adjacent to the university. It measures more than 1,200 hectares (3,000 acres) in all, a mixture of developed recreation facilities and attractions and quieter, undeveloped natural areas. Kids tend to like it a lot. The popular park is also home to the city's **campground** (see "Where to Stay," below) and its **Fluvarium** (see "Exploring Farther Afield," above), as well as miniature golf and regulation-size golf courses, picnic tables, playgrounds, and hiking trails.

The **Grand Concourse ★** (✆ **709/737-1077**) is an ambitious project to create an extensive network of walking trails throughout the metro St. John's area. More than 112km (70 miles) have been completed to date, and while none are open to bikes, this is a wonderful resource you should take advantage of for a stroll. Two of the best sections are the **loop around Quidi Vidi Lake** (an almost 4km/2¼-mile circuit that should take you less than an hour) and the 3km (2-mile) **Rennie's River Trail** (perhaps 40 minutes) running between Pippy Park and the lake. Ask for a current map of the Concourse at the tourist information center, or check the trail's website (www.grandconcourse.ca) for aerial and mapped views of the trails.

SHOPPING

A number of downtown shops tout "traditional" souvenirs, though their offerings run the gamut from quality craftsmanship to tourist schlock; choose carefully. Duckworth Street

 is the main shopping area, and the street to walk up and down if you've only got time to shop a little.

For the real stuff, though, consult the online search engine of the Craft Council of Newfoundland and Labrador at **www.craftcouncil.nl.ca/studio**. You can search by region; select "Downtown St. John's," and you get back a list of about a dozen potters, printmakers, fiber artists, and other artisans.

The Bird House and Binocular Shop ★ This is a great stop for both serious and amateur birders. The shop stocks a wide selection of field guides, binoculars, and spotting scopes, along with seed and other backyard supplies. Binoculars are available for rent, and the shop distributes a brochure with a checklist of local species and suggested birding areas around St. John's. And, kitschy though they may be, it also sells bright, colorful handmade wooden birdhouses that resemble stylized historic townhouses in the city: an unusual souvenir, to say the least. 166 Duckworth St. ✆ **709/726-2473.**

Devon House Craft Centre ★ Devon House is a historic brick building dating from the mid-19th century, right across from the Hotel Newfoundland, today operated by the Craft Council of Newfoundland & Labrador. The Council displays the works of dozens of the province's craftspeople in a shop here, specializing in (but not exclusively focusing on) works of clay. There's also a gallery. Both are open daily, year-round. 59 Duckworth St. ✆ **709/753-2749.**

Fred's This shop features a great selection of music on record (yes, they still sell vinyl), tape, and CD, plus a knowledgeable sales staff to guide you through it all; in particular, they specialize in traditional Irish music and Newfoundland folk. You can sample the CDs on headphones before you buy, and there are frequent live performances by local musicians right in the store. 198 Duckworth St. ✆ **709/753-9191.**

Newfoundland Weavery This shop started as a weaving supply store, and has since expanded to become a showcase for local arts and crafts, including pottery, oilskin coats, and pewter work, in addition to the textiles. It's open surprisingly late (9pm) Thursdays and Fridays. 177 Water St. ✆ **709/753-0496.**

O'Brien's Music Store ★ This brick storefront has been here since 1939—as the owners like to say, it's "the oldest store on the oldest street in the oldest city in North America." It's a popular hangout for local musicians looking for guitars, strings, or more traditional instruments (accordions? Tin whistles? Got 'em). In addition to all its gear (plus instructional music books and videos), O'Brien's also carries an excellent selection of Newfoundland-made tapes and CDs. 278 Water St. ✆ **709/753-8135.**

Wordplay Bookstore This is a great one-stop shop for books about Newfoundland and Labrador, books by Newfoundlanders, or even good books written by anyone else (including me, hopefully). They sell new books, used books, even first editions and other rarities. 221 Duckworth St. ✆ **800/563-9100** or 709/726-9193.

CAPE SPEAR ★

About 11km (7 miles) southeast of downtown is North America's most easterly point, marked by the dramatic **Cape Spear National Historic Site** (✆ **709/772-5367**). There's a blocky, picture-perfect white lighthouse on the point here dating from 1836, plus underground passages from abandoned World War II gun batteries.

A visitor center orients you; budget time to walk the site's hiking trails and scout for whales at sea afterward. Admission to the lighthouse, which has been restored to its 1839 appearance and opens from 10am to 6pm daily in season, is C$3.90 for adults, C$3.40

for seniors, C$1.90 for children ages 6 to 16, and C$9.80 for families. Note that the lighthouse, visitor center, and on-site gift shop close from mid-October until mid-May. But the scenic grounds are open (and free) year-round.

Get to the cape by following Water Street south out of the downtown area to Route 10, continuing a bit, then turning left at Leslie Street onto Blackhead Road. Cross over train tracks and under the highway, following Blackhead Road as it twists and turns about 11km (7 miles) to land's end.

BELL ISLAND ★★

In the other direction, about 14km (9 miles) west of the city center, is **Portugal Cove** (take Route 40/Portugal Cove Rd.), from which regular ferries depart for nearby **Bell Island** year-round. It's a recommended stop: This is a handsome and historic island, with sharp, green-topped cliffs edging its eastern shore.

First, a little history: This was the only place in North America that lost lives to German U-boats. It happened in 1942, when two iron-ore carrying ships were sunk in the bay (you can still scuba dive to their wrecks, if you hire a boat to take you to the spot) in a sneaky nighttime torpedo attack; during peacetime, German captains had previously run iron boats themselves, so they knew the terrain well. A second sub attack later that week sunk two more ships; 69 men died in all. Later, Bell Island became a thriving community for a time (its population approached 14,000 at one point) thanks to its rich **iron deposits;** a huge mine here employed hundreds of locals from 1896 until it closed in 1966. (The island is still honeycombed with shafts, some extending far out beneath the sea floor.)

The abandoned mine known as "No. 2" on Bell Island, once the largest undersea iron mine in the world, has been maintained as a museum of sorts by the town. At the **Bell Island Community Museum and Mine Tour** ★ (✆ **709/488-2880**), visitors relive the life of a typical miner, who made his way through the perpetual darkness with a carbide lantern. During a 40-minute tour, you'll descend 180m (200 yards) underground to the point after which potential flooding makes further walking in the shaft dangerous. (The shaft actually descends another 480m/⅓ of a mile into the earth; it's something like 5km/3 miles long in total, when you add up all the parts.)

Wear sneakers and bring a sweater or warm jacket; you'll also be issued a hardhat which you must wear at all times. The tours are offered frequently daily in summer; combination tickets incorporating the tour and museum cost C$10 for adults, C$8 seniors, and C$3 for children under 12. Tickets to the museum alone are C$5 for adults and C$4 for seniors (kids enter for free), though it's frankly a lot less fun than the catacombs. The museum and mine are open daily from June through September, from 11am to 7pm.

Ask locals for directions to the **Grebe's Nest** ★★, a rocky point of land on the island's northern shore marked by an offshore sea stack. From a parking area, you take a short walk through a (man-made) tunnel opening out onto a secluded beach surrounded by towering, crumbling cliffs. It's a great spot to snap a romantic photo at sunset or to spy the grebes that nest there.

You'll also find a few simple accommodations, some lowbrow seafood restaurants, and an art gallery or two on the island. Most travelers use the island as a day trip, savoring its laid-back pace as a contrast to the "big city," which is 20 minutes away.

The **ferry** (✆ **888/638-5454** from Canada only or 709/535-6244) costs C$6.25 per car and driver, plus C$2.25 per extra adult (C$1.75 for students, children 5 and over,

Sacks In the City: Tenting St. John's

Camp right in the heart of a capital city? Only in Newfoundland. If you're heading to St. John's and want to rough it a bit, head straight for the seasonal city-owned **Pippy Park Campground** ★ (✆ **877/477-3655** or 709/737-3669), a couple miles from the city center off Allandale Road. (Reach that road by using the city's ring road, signed in this area as Prince Phillip Dr.)

The campground has nearly 216 sites, most with full hookups, plus a sociable tenting area, playgrounds, and a 24-hour coin-op laundry. Some sites are in forested areas, while others are in an open meadow; rates range from C$20 per night (for a tent site) to C$40 (for a fully serviced pull-through site with electricity, water, sewer, and Wi-Fi access). This campground often books full in summer, so it's a good idea to call ahead for reservations. (You can also reserve a spot online, using a link from the park's main web page at www.pippypark.com.) The campground opens from May through October.

and seniors). It runs every 40 minutes from about 6am (later on weekends) until about 10:30pm, except in very bad weather; the crossing of Conception Bay only takes about 20 minutes. There's a small tourist office in the island's village, but it's easier just to consult the island's good website (www.bellisland.net) before arriving.

WHERE TO STAY

St. John's has the largest range of accommodations in the province, offering a supply of everything from business hotels to simple B&Bs—plus an unusually wide choice of luxury inns, for some reason.

If you're looking to save money, on the other hand, there's a small, 10-bed **hostel** (✆ **709/754-4789;** all ages welcome) with communal kitchen and laundry facilities at 8 Gower St. You can even **camp** not far from the downtown and waterfront; see the box "Sacks in the City: Tenting St. John's" above for details on how to do that.

Expensive

Delta St. John's Hotel ★ Kids The sleek, modern Delta St. John's is located downtown near City Hall and caters mostly to businesspeople. Though it lacks the ultra-luxe feel of the Sheraton, it still has plenty of business-hotel amenities (pool, health club, and so on) and nice touches such as ships' models in the lobby and a handsome pool table as the centerpiece of its lounge. Some suites on the top two floors have wet bars (but they're very expensive, to match). The best reasons to stay here? The hotel is centrally located for prowling the city. And staff operate a surprising number of children's programs, plus offer babysitting services. The chummy **Mickey Quinn's** restaurant off the lobby serves three meals daily; the dinner menu, just as you'd expect, leans mostly toward local seafood and steaks.

120 New Gower St., St. John's, NL A1C 6K4. ✆ **888/890-3222** or 709/570-1614. www.deltahotels.com. 403 units. C$99–C$650 double and suite. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Valet parking C$20 per day, self-parking C$10 per day. Pets allowed with advance permission. **Amenities:** Restaurant; babysitting; children's program; concierge; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; limited room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units), hair dryer, minibar.

Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland ★★ Now flagged as a Sheraton (it was formerly a Fairmont property), the Newfoundland was built in 1982 in a stark, modernist style,

but it sells old-fashioned refined sensibility and attention to detail. The designers and architects have been subtle about their best surprises; the lobby has one of the best views of The Narrows in all of the city, but you have to hunt some to find it. (This helps compensate for the somewhat generic, conference-hotel feel of much of the furnishings.) Rooms themselves are standard-sized and unremarkable, though all of them do have bathrobes and free high-speed Internet access; about half have harbor views. There are also five suites. The hotel's lobby is home to three good dining establishments, including the formal **Cabot Club** ★★, one of the best fine-dining restaurants in the city. It's well known locally for prepared-at-the-table Caesar salads, caribou soup, and seafood with luxe touches like saffron-truffle butter. The brightly colored **Bonavista Restaurant** is lighter on the wallet (and the waistline), with choices like burgers, sandwiches, vegetable pasta, and poached salmon; the house bar, the **Narrows Lounge,** opens daily until midnight. Even though there's a valet parking service here, you probably won't need it—you can self-park right near the door.

115 Cavendish Sq., St. John's, NL A1C 3K2. ✆ **800/325-3535** or 709/726-4980. Fax 709/726-2025. www.sheraton.com. 301 units. C$219–C$349 double and suite. Packages available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Self-parking free (charge for valets). Pets C$20 per night. **Amenities:** 2 restaurants; lounge; babysitting; concierge; health club; Jacuzzi; indoor pool; 24-hr. room service; sauna. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge (some units); hair dryer, minibar.

Moderate

At Wit's Inn ★★ (Value) Despite the corny name, this lovely 1890 home has been wonderfully restored, and its rates remain amazingly reasonable a decade after it opened. Decorated with a sure eye for color and style, it's a welcoming urban oasis just around the corner from downtown's hotels. None of the four rooms are terribly spacious, but neither are they uncomfortably small, and all four are now air-conditioned and furnished with down duvets, televisions, VCRs, and period touches such as sleigh beds, claw-foot tubs, or fireplaces; two of the four units have Internet access. (Note that the largest room is on the top floor, a bit of a hike.) The refinished floors and elaborately carved banister are notable, as are the old-style fixtures (such as a servant's intercom) that have been left intact. A full breakfast is served in the first-floor dining room, and wine and cheese are offered in the late afternoon; there's also a pantry for snacking in between meals.

3 Gower St., St. John's, NL A1C 1M9. ✆ **877/739-7420**. www.atwitsinn.ca. 4 units. C$79–C$129 double. Rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* AC, TV/VCR.

Bonne Esperance House Heritage Inn B&B ★★ Everyone seems to love this place, a series of three connected crimson townhomes on Gower Street in the heart of the downtown area. These three-story homes, all built within a few years of each other and of the city's Great Fire of 1892, are striking with their bowed windows, stained glass work, and top-floor dormers; inside, floors are high-ceilinged and linked by nicely carved staircases. The inn's 11 rooms and suites come in various configurations, but all sport handsome pine flooring, cordless phones, cable television, and bathrobes. Behind the inn there's a small but popular garden for sitting in; an interior den features a flat-screen television and computer with Internet access, and there's also a communal kitchen for guests to use. Wi-Fi access and laundry facilities are thoughtful touches, while the full breakfast of fruit, pastries, and hot dishes is a highlight.

20 Gower St., St. John's, NL A1C 1N1. ✆ **888/726-3835** or 709/726-3835. Fax 709/739-0496. www.bonneesperancehouse.com. 11 units. C$135–C$195 double, C$250 suite. Rates include full breakfast. MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

Elizabeth Manor B&B ★ Said to have been the first true B&B in St. John's, the 1894 Elizabeth consists of an attractive grouping of wooden townhomes. (The place is also locally known as the Prescott, if you get lost and need to ask directions back.) The six units were substantially renovated and upgraded in 2004, adding Jacuzzis and sleigh and pencil-poster beds. Some rooms have carpeting, while others have hardwood floors; all are furnished in antiques, and the lowest-priced rooms are among the city's better bargains (you can get a room for as little as C$60 per night). Guests can relax on a balcony running along the back of the building. In addition to managing the inn, the owners also rent out some furnished apartments downtown.

21 Military Rd. (P.O. Box 204), St. John's, NL A1C 2C3. ✆ **888/263-3786** or 709/753-7733. Fax 709/738-7434. www.elizabethmanor.nl.ca. 6 units. Peak season C$60–C$199 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. Pets allowed. *In room:* TV, fridge, Jacuzzi (some).

McCoubrey Manor Bed & Breakfast ★★ Kids McCoubrey Manor offers a convenient downtown location, plus Victorian charm and plenty of floral prints. Carved out of two rambling, adjoining townhouses with big trees in the front yard, the inn is decorated in what might be called "contemporary Victorian" style. The six rooms have been thoroughly modernized, though some *look* modern while others still seem a bit dated. Upstairs rooms have private double Jacuzzis; room no. 1 is brightest and faces the street, while room no. 2 has a sunken Jacuzzi, oak-mantled fireplace, and trim of British Columbian fir. Some units have eat-in kitchens and/or air-conditioning units. Evening tea get-togethers and breakfasts in the main inn add to its charm. This property also manages four simple apartments with full kitchens—less elegant, but more spacious, than the inn—around the corner on Gower Street.

6–8 Ordnance St., St. John's, NL A1C 3K7. ✆ **888/753-7577** or 709/722-7577. Fax 709/579-7577. www.mccoubrey.com. 10 units. Peak season C$139–C$199 double; off season C$89–C$179 double. Rates include full breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Free parking. *In room:* A/C (some units), TV/VCR, fridge (some units), kitchenette (some units), no phone (most units).

Quality Hotel Harbour view Courteous service and a great downtown location with free parking are among the merits of this modernish chain hotel, located on the tiny uphill block known as "Hill O'Chips." Rooms here are standard sized, comfortable, and clean; they're set apart mainly by their views—ask for one overlooking The Narrows. You can easily walk downtown to the key restaurants and attractions in a few minutes; the Battery, Signal Hill, and Quidi Vidi are each a pleasant hike in the other direction. The good restaurant on-site serves three meals daily.

2 Hill O'Chips, St. John's, NL A1C 6B1. ✆ **877/424-6423** or 709/754-7788. Fax 709/754-5209. www.qualityinn.com. 160 units. C$99–C$159 double. Off-season discounts available. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Free parking. **Amenities:** Restaurant. *In room:* A/C, TV, hair dryer.

WHERE TO DINE

I've listed some good gourmet and mid-range dining choices below. But there are also plenty of cheap eats in this seaside town. Roving **chip trucks** dispense fried fish in a flash cluster down by the waterfront in places like Church Hill Square and along Water Street.

Budget eaters should also wander uphill to the **intersection of Lemarchant and Freshwater roads**—within a two-block radius, you'll find numerous and varied eat-in and takeout options. The undisputed king of takeout around here is **Ches's Fish and Chips** ★, at 9 Freshwater Rd. (✆ **709/726-2373**), a chip shop where they've been serving up huge portions of fried fish, chicken wings, and burgers since 1958. They've made

Calling All Coffee

As you might expect, St. John's sustains a very healthy cafe culture. In addition to several outposts of the Green Giant (you know who you are), you can also furrow your brow artistically over a book or laptop at **HavaJava**—the city's original gourmet coffeehouse, and one that stays open till 11pm—at 216 Water St. (✆ **709/753-5282**); **Coffee Matters Too,** at 321 Water St. (✆ **709/753-4562**); the **Lazy Dog Cafe,** in the Avalon Mall on Kenmount Rd. (just off the Phillip Drive ring road); and the **Jumping Bean Coffee Company** (✆ **709/754-4538**) at 47 Harvey Rd., very close to The Rooms historic complex (see "Exploring St. John's," above).

an effort lately to add healthy items to the menu, but come for the signature dish. Amazingly, the shop is open as late as 2am—and they'll deliver, too.

Finally, for local microbrew, either hit the **Fog City Brewing** (✆ **709/726-4949**) brewpub in the Avalon Mall or tour the well-situated **Quidi Vidi Brewery** ★ (✆ **800/738-0165** or 709/738-4040) at 35 Barrows Rd. inside a former fish plant in scenic Quidi Vidi.

Expensive

The Cellar ★★ CONTINENTAL The classy interior here is a surprise—the building containing the restaurant looks pretty plain from the outside. Inside, though, it's as intimate and warm as a gentleman's social club. (The restaurant is located on the fourth floor, by the way, not in the cellar.) Chef Harold Brown's kitchen has developed a foodie following. Look for the Mediterranean, tropical, and fruity influences that pervade and perk up the menu. Lunch means things like pot pies, pan-fried cod with scrunchions (bits of pork), baked scallop-and-bacon crepes, grilled New York strip steaks, and Thai-fried squid; dinner is a more serious affair. Begin with one of several luscious chowders, Brie baked in phyllo dough, or a plate of pan-fried cod tongues, then move on to grilled or roasted racks of lamb, the steak-jumbo shrimp combo plate, roasted pork tenderloin with pear chutney, pan-blackened scallops, or a "hot and sticky" Asian shrimp dish flavored with mango and chile sauce. This place is located in the heart of the downtown action, so it's an easy pop-in after sightseeing—but try to make a reservation, as it gets popular in summer.

189 Water St. ✆ **709/579-8900.** www.thecellarrestaurant.ca. Reservations recommended. Main courses C$10–C$24 at lunch, C$24–C$47 at dinner. AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–2:30pm and 5:30–9pm (Fri until 10pm); Sat 5:30–10pm; Sun 5:30–9:30pm.

Moderate

Classic Café East CANADIAN This come-as-you-are eatery is appropriately named: It's a classic St. John's spot, and everyone in town seems to drop by at some point. Breakfast is served until 4pm, but don't expect toast and tea; the entrees are longshoreman-hefty (sirloin with eggs, toast, home fries, and baked beans is just a single menu item). Lunch and dinner portions, mostly of diner fare and seafood, are generous and surprisingly good.

73 Duckworth St. ✆ **709/726-4444.** Main courses C$6–C$8 at breakfast and lunch, C$8–C$17 at dinner. DC, MC, V. 24 hr. daily.

Zachary's TRADITIONAL Another down-home eatery in the downtown, Zachary's is an informal spot with wooden-slat booths offering a slew of Newfoundland favorites

like fish cakes, fried bologna (yes, really), and Acadian-style *toutons* (dough fried in pork fat) . . . and that's just for breakfast. The dinner menu here mostly emphasizes seafood; entrees could include grilled salmon, seafood fettuccine, pan-fried cod, or lobster if it's in season. You'll also find plenty of steaks and chicken. Breakfasts, served all day, are good and desserts (cheesecake, carrot cake, date squares) are homemade.

71 Duckworth St. ✆ **709/579-8050.** Reservations recommended. Main courses C$3.30–C$7.50 at breakfast, C$6–C$9 at lunch, C$11–C$20 at dinner. AE, MC, V. Daily 7am–11pm.

Inexpensive

International Flavours (Value) INDIAN This storefront restaurant, inside a green clapboard house, has just five tables; all dinners are priced at less than C$8, which gets you a mound of Indian food. You'll usually have a choice of four or so dishes, though the smart money goes for basic curries. The mango milkshake is a satisfying way to finish a meal (and put out the fire).

124 Duckworth St. ✆ **709/738-4636.** Dinner plates C$6.95–C$7.95. V. Tues–Sat 11:30am–7pm.

ST. JOHN'S AFTER DARK

The nightlife in St. John's is extraordinarily vibrant, and you are doing yourself a serious injustice if you don't spend at least one evening on a pub crawl enjoying the local music, atmosphere, and drink.

Your first stop will probably be **George Street,** which runs for several blocks near New Gower and Water streets, close to City Hall. Every St. John's resident confidently asserts this street is home to more bars per square foot than anywhere else on the planet; being unable to track down a global authority that tracks and verifies these statistics, I couldn't confirm this mighty large boast. But it sure looks like it *could* hold the record.

The street is packed with pubs and lounges—some fueled by beer, others by testosterone, still others (the best) by lively Celtic fiddling. The best strategy is to do a slow ramble down the strip beginning around 10pm or a little later, peeking inside those that seem to have appealing music wafting from within. Cover charges are universally cheap around St. John's, rarely topping C$5.

Screecher Feature

The city's traditional "screeching-in" ceremonies often surprise first-time tourists out for a drink in St. John's. It's a local ritual designed to do three things: Indoctrinate you into local life and graces; distract you from the challenge of downing the province's powerful local "screech" rum; and embarrass the heck out of you. (Locals tend to neglect to mention this part when inviting you into such a ceremony.) Bars up and down the George Street strip do the ceremony daily for blow-ins like you, more for their own amusement than your actual benefit. It basically involves goodly quantities of the cheap Newfoundland rum, plus the wearing of silly clothes, the eating of a local sardinelike fish, the kissing of a codfish, and a few other steps—all done in a very public fashion. Think of it as a college hazing, plus tapas, minus the paddles. If you're a good sport, step right up. Avoid it if you're very shy in social situations (or allergic to fish).

For blues and traditional music, try the lively **Fat Cat Blues Bar,** 5 George St. (✆ **709/739-5554**), with acts scheduled almost every single night. It's open until 2am at a minimum, even on weeknights. A more upscale spot with slightly lower decibel levels is **Christian's Bar,** 23 George St. (✆ **709/753-9100**), which also serves specialty coffees. **Trapper John's,** 2 George St. (✆ **709/579-9630**), is known for its outstanding provincial folk music and pub beers; in addition, it tries harder (sometimes too hard) to affect a sort of Olde Newfoundland/modern-day pirate atmosphere.

Finally, **The Ship Inn** ★ (✆ **709/753-3870**) is tucked down an alley at 265 Duckworth St., a few blocks off George St. It's your best bet for true local character. In a public-house atmosphere filled with interesting locals, friendly bartenders dispense beer, wisdom, and local eating tips. It's a St. John's institution, featuring plenty of live local music.

9

Fast Facts

1 FAST FACTS: THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES

AMERICAN EXPRESS American Express offers travel services, including check cashing and trip planning, through a number of affiliated agencies in the region. Call ✆ **800/221-7282** for the nearest location.

AREA CODES The area code for New Brunswick is ✆ **506;** the area code for Newfoundland and Labrador is ✆ **709;** and the area code for *both* Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island is ✆ **902.**

AUTOMOBILE ORGANIZATIONS The Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) extends all member benefits, including discounts, maps, and emergency road service, to U.S. AAA cardholders. If you're a AAA member, bring your membership card on your trip. For information about joining CAA, call the eastern provinces office in Saint John at ✆ **800/561-8807** or 506/634-1400; the association's website is located at www.caa.ca. For emergency road service in a pinch, call CAA's hotline at ✆ **800/222-4357** (or ✆ ***222** from some cellphones).

BUSINESS HOURS Business hours in eastern Canada are generally similar to what you'd find in the United States. Most **offices** are open from 8 or 9am to 5 or 6pm Monday through Friday and are closed on weekends. Boutiques and souvenir **shops** typically open up around 10am and stay open until 6pm or so, often later during the peak tourist season. Hours vary widely for general merchandise and **grocery stores.** In general, you can expect early and late hours in the larger cities (even 24-hr. groceries are cropping up), more limited hours in the smaller towns and villages. Most general merchandise stores are closed on Sundays.

DRINKING L AWS The legal drinking age is 19 years in all provinces. Restaurants that serve alcoholic beverages are said to be "licensed." If you want to tipple with dinner, look for a sign or ask whether the establishment is licensed. Do *not* drink and drive; Canadian law takes drunken driving very seriously, and you could do hard time. Also, don't let anyone carry open containers of alcohol in your car, and don't bring them into any public area that isn't properly zoned for alcohol consumption. The police can fine you on the spot.

DRIVING RULES See "Getting There and Getting Around," p. 31.

ELECTRICITY Canada uses the same electrical current as the United States, 110–115 volts (60 cycles), compared to 220–240 volts AC (50 cycles) in most of Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Downward converters that change 220–240 volts to 110–120 volts are difficult to find, so bring one with you.

If you're coming from Europe, bring a **connection kit** of the right power and phone adapters, a spare phone cord, and a spare Ethernet network cable—or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES All foreign embassies in Canada are in Ottawa, the national capital. The **U.S. embassy** is at 490 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, ON K1N 1G8 (✆ **613/688-5335**).

The **Australian High Commission** is at 50 O'Connor St., Room 710, Ottawa, ON K1P 6L2 (✆ **613/236-0841**).

The **British High Commission** is at 80 Elgin St., Ottawa, ON K1P 5K7 (✆ **613/237-1530**).

The **Irish Embassy** is at 130 Albert St., Suite 1105, Ottawa, ON K1P 5G4 (✆ **613/233-6281**).

The **New Zealand High Commission** is at 99 Bank St., Suite 727, Ottawa, ON K1P 6G3 (✆ **613/238-5991**).

The **South African High Commission** is at 15 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, ON K1M 1M8 (✆ **613/744-0330**).

If you're in the Maritimes and need help on the spot, there's also a **U.S. Consulate General** in Purdy's Wharf Tower 2, Suite 904, 1969 Upper Water St., Halifax, NS B3J 3R7 (✆ **902/429-2480**).

EMERGENCIES For fire, police, and ambulance, find any phone and dial ✆ **911.** If this fails, dial 0 (zero) and report an emergency.

GASOLINE (PETROL) American drivers tend to get excited about the price of gasoline when they first cross the border into Canada, thinking it to be very cheap. It is not. Gasoline is priced by the liter here, not the gallon, and it's actually *more* expensive than it is in the United States. My quick and dirty guide? **Multiply the price per liter on the sign by 3** to get a good idea of what gas is costing you per gallon in U.S. dollars.

HOLIDAYS The national holidays in Canada are celebrated from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic oceans; for the traveler, this means all government offices and banks will be closed at these times. (Shops remain open on some but not all national holidays.) **National holidays** here include New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day (the third Monday in May, always 1 week before Memorial Day in the United States), Canada Day (July 1; this is a biggie—expect fireworks), Labour Day (first Monday in September, same as in the U.S.), Thanksgiving (mid-October; the same as Columbus Day weekend in the United States), Remembrance Day (November 11), Christmas Day (December 25), and Boxing Day (December 26).

Locally observed **provincial holidays** include a civic holiday (August 2) in Nova Scotia; New Brunswick Day (the first Monday in August); and several holidays in Newfoundland and Labrador, including St. George's Day (April 26), Discovery Day (nearest Monday to June 24, for John Cabot's "discovery" of Canada), and Orangeman's Day (July 12). Check out the proceedings.

Acadian pockets of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, or Prince Edward Island also celebrate St. Jean Baptiste Day (June 24), which was actually pagan in origin (for the summer solstice, known in Europe as midsummer's night) but has since become associated with Catholic, Québecois, and Franco culture. Expect tons of Franco fun on this day—and remember that the festivities actually begin the day *before* Jean Baptiste Day, on June 23.

INSURANCE I always recommend carrying some form of **travel insurance,** no matter how rudimentary, even when traveling to a place as incredibly safe as eastern Canada. The cost of this insurance varies widely depending on the destination, the cost and length of your trip, your age and health, and the type of trip you're taking, but you can usually expect to pay between 5% and 8% of the total cost of the trip itself. Make sure it covers against "carrier default" for your specific travel provider. And be aware that if a U.S. airline goes bust mid-trip, a federal law requires other carriers to take you to your destination (on a space-available basis) for a fee of no more than US$25, provided you rebook within 60 days of the cancellation.

Trip-cancellation insurance might also be a good idea. This form of insurance can help you retrieve your money if you need to back out of a trip or depart early—or if your travel outfitter suddenly goes

bankrupt. Trip cancellation traditionally covers such events as sickness, natural disasters, and State Department advisories. The latest news in trip-cancellation insurance is the availability of **"any reason" cancellation coverage**—which costs more but covers cancellations made for any reason. You won't get back 100% of your prepaid trip cost, but you'll be refunded a substantial portion.

There's also **lost-luggage insurance**. On international flights (including U.S. portions of international trips), baggage coverage is limited to approximately US$9 per pound, up to about US$635 per checked bag. If you plan to check items more valuable than what's covered by the standard liability, see if your homeowner's policy covers your valuables, or get baggage insurance as part of your comprehensive travel-insurance package. If your luggage is lost, *immediately* file a lost-luggage claim at the airport, detailing the luggage contents. Most airlines require that you report delayed, damaged, or lost baggage within 4 hours of arrival. The airlines are required to deliver luggage, once found, directly to your house or destination free of charge.

For more information about travel insurance, trip cancelation insurance, and medical insurance while traveling visit the Frommer's website at www.frommers.com/planning.

LANGUAGE Canada has two official languages, English and French. As such, you'll see signs and tourist materials in both languages throughout the four Atlantic provinces. English is universally understood and primarily used throughout Atlantic Canada, except perhaps in a few Franco villages.

LOST & FOUND Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two.

Visa's emergency number is ✆ **800/847-2911.** American Express cardholders and traveler's check holders should call ✆ **800/221-7282.** MasterCard holders should call ✆ **800/307-7309.**

If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (✆ **800/325-6000;** www.westernunion.com).

MAIL Canadian cities and towns of a decent size have at least one post office apiece. At press time, first-class postage rates for a normal-sized letter sent from Canada were C54¢ to Canada, C98¢ to the United States, and C$1.65 to any other country in the world. Postcards cost less; packages and express services cost more, sometimes considerably more. Remember that you will need to fill out a customs form, and possibly pay duty taxes, if you're mailing something of value back home from Canada. For full information on rates and postal requirements, go to www.canadapost.ca.

Express parcel services are also readily available in eastern Canada, including **FedEx** (www.fedex.ca), **UPS** (www.ups.ca), and **DHL** (www.dhl.ca). Package rates vary considerably according to the item being mailed, depending on such factors as distance to the destination, weight, and how quickly you want the item to arrive. Consult the websites of the carrier for specific shipping rates.

Always include zip codes when mailing anything to the U.S. If you don't know the relevant zip code, visit the postal service online at www.usps.com/zip4 to look it up.

NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES Publishers in the major cities of the province—including Halifax, Saint John, Fredericton,

Charlottetown, and St. John's—all produce very decent daily newspapers filled with information about goings-on around the town and province. Most also maintain websites, so you can scout out happenings before your departure. Canada's two national newspapers—*The Globe and Mail* and the *National Post*—are also widely available in most cities and many larger towns. U.S. papers such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times* can be found in larger cities, but you shouldn't count on it. When available, they often sell out early. Newsmagazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek* are not difficult to find on newsstands.

PASSPORTS Consult our website, www.frommers.com/planning, for some important information on how to obtain a passport. Or contact the following agencies:

Residents of Australia Contact the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ✆ **131-232,** or visit the government website at www.passports.gov.au.

Residents of Canada Contact the central **Passport Office,** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (✆ **800/567-6868;** www.ppt.gc.ca).

Residents of Ireland Contact the **Passport Office,** Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (✆ **01/671-1633;** www.irlgov.ie/iveagh).

Residents of New Zealand Contact the **Passports Office** at ✆ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

Residents of the United Kingdom Visit your nearest passport office, major post office, or travel agency or contact the **United Kingdom Passport Service** at ✆ **0870/521-0410** or search its website at www.ukpa.gov.uk.

For Residents of the **United States** To find your regional passport office, either check the U.S. State Department website (www.state.gov) or call the **National Passport Information Center's** toll-free number (✆ **877/487-2778**) for automated information.

POLICE For police, dial ✆ **911.** If this fails, dial 0 (zero) and report an emergency.

SMOKING Smoking is now banned from all public places in eastern Canada, although that is a fairly recent change. Prince Edward Island banned the practice first, in 2003; New Brunswick followed a year later; and Newfoundland followed in 2005. Nova Scotia banned public smoking only in 2006—but with a minimum fine for smoking of C$2,000. (Bars and restaurants in Nova Scotia, however, can maintain smoking rooms, so long as they are completely separated from other public spaces and very well ventilated.)

The minimum legal age to purchase tobacco in Canada is 18. However, some provinces—including all the Maritime Provinces (Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador)—have raised that age locally to 19.

TAXES Canada's high taxes offset some of the advantages you gain when paying in Canadian dollars. **Three of the four Maritime Provinces**—New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland—use the so-called **HST** (**Harmonized Sales Tax).** HST combines provincial and federal sales taxes into one flat 13% tax charged on *all* goods and services. Local cities sometimes apply an additional tax for hotels. On **Prince Edward Island,** it's different: The national sales tax (5.5%, called GST on your bill) is folded into the hefty PEI provincial tax of 10%—the highest in Canada—for a 15.5% total tax on most items (including a tax on the federal sales tax). Footwear, clothing, books, and groceries are exempt from the 10% PEI portion of that tax, however.

Until very recently, non-Canadians could apply for a refund of their entire HST (or the GST only, on Prince Edward Island) upon leaving the country. That is no longer true: Canada's legislature made the Visitor Rebate Program go *poof* in 2007. Tear up those rebate forms. However, very importantly, *those who tour eastern Canada on a tour package can reclaim part of Canada's taxes.* Confused? You're not the only one. The website www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/visitors has more answers on Canada's national and provincial taxes.

TELEPHONES To make a **reverse-charge** or **collect call,** and for person-to-person calls, dial 0 plus the area code and number you want to reach; an operator should then come on the line, and you can specify whether you are calling collect, person-to-person, or both. If your operator-assisted call is international, ask for the overseas operator.

For **local directory assistance** ("information") in Canada, dial ✆ **411.** For **long-distance information**, dial 1, the area code of the province you're seeking a number for (see "Area Codes," above), and then ✆ 555-1212. These calls both cost money. Toll-free directory assistance, however, is free; dial ✆ **800/555-1212**.

See "Staying Connected," in chapter 3, for more information on using telephone and cellphone services in eastern Canada.

TIME Most of Atlantic Canada is on Atlantic Standard Time, 1 hour ahead of Eastern Standard Time (as observed in New England and the U.S. East Coast). The exceptions are Newfoundland and southeast Labrador, which are a half-hour ahead of Atlantic Standard Time.

TIPPING As in the United States, tips provide a significant portion of the income for waiters, bellhops, and chambermaids. It's standard to leave 15% of the pre-sales tax total for basic service at a restaurant; more if the service is exceptional. In hotels, plan to tip **bellhops** around C$1 per bag (C$2–C$3 if you have a lot of luggage) and the **chamber staff** C$1 to C$2 per day (more if you've left a disaster area for him or her to clean up). Tip the **doorman** or **concierge** only if he or she has provided you with some specific service (for example, calling a cab for you or obtaining difficult-to-get theater tickets). Tip the **valet-parking attendant** C$1 every time you get your car.

In restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, tip **service staff** and **bartenders** 15% to 20% of the check, tip **checkroom attendants** C$1 per garment, and tip **valet-parking attendants** C$1 per vehicle.

As for other service personnel, tip **cab drivers** roughly 15% of your fare; tip **skycaps** at airports at least C$1 per bag (C$2–C$3 if you have a lot of luggage); and tip **hairdressers** and **barbers** 15% to 20%, depending on service.

TOILETS Generally called "washrooms" in Canada, public bathrooms are typically abundant and clean. Many towns have a visitor information center, and most of these have washrooms for visitors. In larger cities, washrooms can be found in public buildings, major hotels, some larger shops, and restaurants.

VISAS American travelers to Canada do not require visas and neither do residents of many other countries, including citizens of most European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Mexico, and some present and former British territories in the Caribbean—this includes anyone holding a green card in the U.S. or anyone who is a British overseas citizen of the U.K. Needless to say, bring your identification or the relevant paperwork on your trip. If you're still not sure about whether you will need a visa or not, consult the Canadian government's up-to-date listing of countries whose residents *do* need one at www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp.

VISITOR INFORMATION It's well worth a toll-free call or postcard in advance of your trip to stock up on the free literature and maps that provincial authorities

liberally bestow upon those considering a vacation in their province. Here's how to reach the official tourism folks who dispense these goodies:

- **Nova Scotia Department of Tourism,** Culture & Heritage, World Trade Centre, 6th Floor, 1800 Argyle St. (P.O. Box 456) Halifax, NS B3J 2R5. ✆ **800/565-0000** or 902/424-5000; explore@gov.ns.ca.
- **New Brunswick Department of Tourism & Parks,** P.O. Box 12345, Campbellton, NB E3N 3T6. ✆ **800/561-0123;** info@tourismnewbrunswick.ca.
- **Tourism PEI,** P.O. Box 2000, Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N8. ✆ **800/463-4734** or 902/368-4444; peiplay@gov.pe.ca.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Tourism,** Culture & Recreation, P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NL A1B 4J6. ✆ **709/729-0862;** tcrinfo@gov.nl.ca.

All four provinces staff helpful **visitor centers** at key access points, including the main roadways running into the provinces and their major cities. Expect cordial staff and exceptionally well-stocked racks overflowing with menus, brochures, and booklets. Excellent **road maps** are also available from all four provincial tourism authorities—ask at the welcome centers. These maps are free except in Newfoundland, where the province has traditionally charged for them, though you can usually also obtain a Newfoundland map for free simply by phoning the province's tourism office in advance of your trip and requesting a visitor packet.

Staff at these centers provide a surplus of information on local attractions, and they can also fill you in on what's happening anywhere else in the province so that you can plan a few days in advance. If the staffers don't have the information you need at their fingertips, they'll often make phone calls and track it down for you.

The centers are most numerous in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island; New Brunswick's information centers are equally helpful, though not as numerous. Newfoundland's visitor centers—with the exception of the modern information centers near the two main ferry terminals—are typically less polished than in the other provinces, yet authorities have been successful in making improvements. Look in the regional chapters of this guide for addresses and phone numbers of the main visitor centers in each area.

All four provinces also publish free, magazine-size **travel guides** crammed with essential information on hotels, inns, campgrounds, and attractions. Nova Scotia's tome sets an international standard for high-quality information (and size), and the other provincial guides are excellent and unfailingly helpful, as well.

You can also go online to get information in advance. Here are a few places to start clicking:

- Nova Scotia's official website is a great whirlwind tour of accommodations and tourism sites; you can even download a bit of local music. It can be found at **www.explorens.com** or **www.novascotia.com**.
- Nova Scotia Provincial Parks' website provides basic, up-to-date information about its many excellent parks at **www.parks.gov.ns.ca**.
- The official New Brunswick tourism site offers a great place to start: **www.tourismnewbrunswick.ca**.
- The official Prince Edward Island tourism information resource can be found at both **www.gentleisland.com** and **www.peiplay.com**.
- Newfoundland & Labrador's official website can be visited on the Internet at both **www.gov.nl.ca/tourism** and the unwieldy (but much easier to remember) alternative address **www.newfoundlandlabrador.com**.

- Finally, for information about travels in the region's national parks, a good first stop is the Parks Canada official website at **www.pc.gc.ca**.

2 AIRLINE, HOTEL & CAR RENTAL WEBSITES

MAJOR AIRLINES

Aeroméxico
www.aeromexico.com

Air France
www.airfrance.com

Air India
www.airindia.com

Air New Zealand
www.airnewzealand.com

Alitalia
www.alitalia.com

American Airlines
www.aa.com

British Airways
www.british-airways.com

China Airlines
www.china-airlines.com

Continental Airlines
www.continental.com

Delta Air Lines
www.delta.com

Japan Airlines
www.jal.co.jp

JetBlue Airways
www.jetblue.com

Korean Air
www.koreanair.com

Lufthansa
www.lufthansa.com

Northwest Airlines
www.nwa.com

Quantas Airways
www.quantas.com

Swiss Air
www.swiss.com

United Airlines
www.united.com

US Airways
www.usairways.com

Virgin Atlantic Airways
www.virgin-atlantic.com

BUDGET AIRLINES

Aer Lingus
www.aerlingus.com

AirTran Airways
www.airtran.com

Southwest Airlines
www.southwest.com

WestJet
www.westjet.com

MAJOR HOTEL & MOTEL CHAINS

Best Western International
www.bestwestern.com

Clarion Hotels
www.choicehotels.com

Comfort Inns
www.ComfortInn.com

Courtyard by Marriott
www.marriott.com/courtyard

Crowne Plaza Hotels
www.ichotelsgroup.com/crowneplaza

Days Inn
www.daysinn.com

Doubletree Hotels
www.doubletree.com

Econo Lodges
www.choicehotels.com

Embassy Suites
www.embassysuites.com

Fairfield Inn by Marriott
www.fairfieldinn.com

Hampton Inn
www.hamptoninn1.hilton.com

Hilton Hotels
www.hilton.com

Holiday Inn
www.holidayinn.com

Howard Johnson
www.hojo.com

Hyatt
www.hyatt.com

Marriott
www.marriott.com

Motel 6
www.motel6.com

Omni Hotels
www.omnihotels.com

Quality
www.qualityinn.choicehotels.com

Radisson Hotels & Resorts
www.radisson.com

Ramada Worldwide
www.ramada.com

Red Carpet Inns
www.bookroomsnow.com

Red Roof Inns
www.redroof.com

Residence Inn by Marriott
www.marriott.com/residenceinn

Sheraton Hotels & Resorts
www.starwoodhotels.com/sheraton

Super 8 Motels
www.super8.com

Travelodge
www.travelodge.com

Vagabond Inns
www.vagabondinn.com

Westin Hotels & Resorts
www.starwoodhotels.com/westin

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts
www.wyndham.com

CAR RENTAL AGENCIES

Alamo
www.alamo.com

Avis
www.avis.com

Budget
www.budget.com

Dollar
www.dollar.com

Enterprise
www.enterprise.com

Hertz
www.hertz.com

National
www.nationalcar.com

Thrifty
www.thrifty.com

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Labrador City
Mécatina R.
Red Bay
St. Anthony
Port au Choix
C. St. John
Gagnon
Manicouagan Res.
Sept-Îles
Baie-Comeau
St. Lawrence R.
Anticosti Island
Gaspé Pen.
Gaspé
Rimouski
GULF OF ST. LAWRENCE
Iles de la Madeleine
Corner Brook
Grand Falls-Windsor
Gander
Stephenville
Maelpaeg Res.
C. Ray
Burgeo
St. John's
Avalon Pen.
Burin Pen.
Trepassey
ST. PIERRE & MIQUELON (France)
Cabot Strait
Cape Breton I.
Sydney
C. Breton
Edmundston
Bathurst
Newcastle
NEW BRUNSWICK
PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Charlottetown
Fredericton
Moncton
New Glasgow
Saint John
Truro
Bay of Fundy
Windsor
NOVA SCOTIA
Halifax
Bridgewater
Lunenburg
Yarmouth
C. Sable
Sable I.
NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR
LABRADOR SEA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
0
200 mi
0
200 km

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•

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